



# I have met Mahatma Gandhi After his Death

*By*

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## I WISH, YOU HAD NEVER BELIEVED ME

While I was a college student I never believed in Gandhi or in any of his doctrines. Some of the English journals of Calcutta (*The Statesman* *The Englishman*, and *The Indian Daily News*) can certify how much of ink I spilt on Gandhi during the Non-cooperation Movement. Some of the publishers of Lahore also can certify how many books I wrote on Gandhi while I was a professor. Then again, some of the leading journals of India can also testify how they commented upon those books of mine, which one or two of them branded as anti-Gandhi publications, not because I was commissioned by the British Government to do any propaganda against Gandhi, but because from my very early youth I was a rebel to idolatry which the world miscalls hero-worship. I have not spared in some of my books even the prophets and saviours of the world who have been responsible for the foundation of the various religious faiths and also of the various international conflicts. So, none of my readers should

think, while reading this little autobiography, that I have suddenly become a staunch disciple of Gandhi, particularly when he is no more in this world. I frankly and boldly declare that I am still a disbeliever in any of the cults or creeds of Gandhi, and as a matter of fact, in any of the doctrines or maxims preached by any of the greatest men of the world. It is not because I claim to be a superman but because I am not prepared to play the same fool which most of the enlightened or un-enlightened human race have been playing ever since the beginning of the world. My only apology for writing this little autobiography is, therefore, to make certain revelations which normally do not occur to the human senses but which nevertheless are as true as certain other experiences of our daily life.

I am sure, the careful readers of the *Amrit Bazar Patrika* can not have missed the report of two incidents which took place a few months ago. One Doctor Singh of Birmingham was reported to have been visited by Gandhi in his clinic in broad daylight. Gandhi had a talk with the doctor for nearly half an hour, and during that

talk, the doctor was advised to chuck off his practice in England and return to India for doing social service to the people. The other incident occurred on the border of Assam where one of the Indian soldiers fell into a fainting fit after a long scuffle with some supernatural being in the early evening. The soldier was treated in the military hospital. He got back his senses but lost his power of speech for at least one week, which he mysteriously recovered one day at the very sight of a photo of Gandhi ! I do not know how far the readers of the *Amrit Bazar Patrika* believed the reports of these two incidents. But then, because I have had similar experiences of Gandhi immediately after the partition of India and also long after, and also because certain other mysterious incidents occurred to my parents, my brothers and sisters and also to my children, I could not afford to pass over in silence, those two little incidents reported in the *Amrit Bazar Patrika*. I would not like to remind my readers that some of them, at any rate, must have had other equally mysterious experiences of the spirit world in which even the greatest modern psychologists believe.

not because they are 'possessed' like you or me, but because they have actually discovered some connecting link between the living and the so-called dead.

What is actually worrying me at present is that the ashes of Gandhi have been scattered in various places, and who knows that it is not due to this ceremony of decomposition of the human body that Gandhi is not having peace even when he is supposed to have definitely left his 'mortal coil' ? Who knows that according to the ancient orthodox Hindu belief, Gandhi's spirit is not still wandering amidst us and trying to tell us that he is not dead but as much alive as any of us ? Honestly speaking, I should like to know if any of my readers has been so far visited by Gandhi after his death, as I fear, he is very likely to have appeared before some at least, not in a dream but in full wakefulness.

I am sure that nothing is wrong with my brains as it has been with one of my brothers who is still lying in the mental hospital of Ranchi, and yet I must confess that I can not explain any of the mysterious experiences which I have related in this

little volume. I would still repeat that I have never been a votary of Gandhi for which reason his departed soul should haunt me like this and torture me to a confession of the greatest secrets of my life. I therefore wish, my readers had never believed me.

Author.





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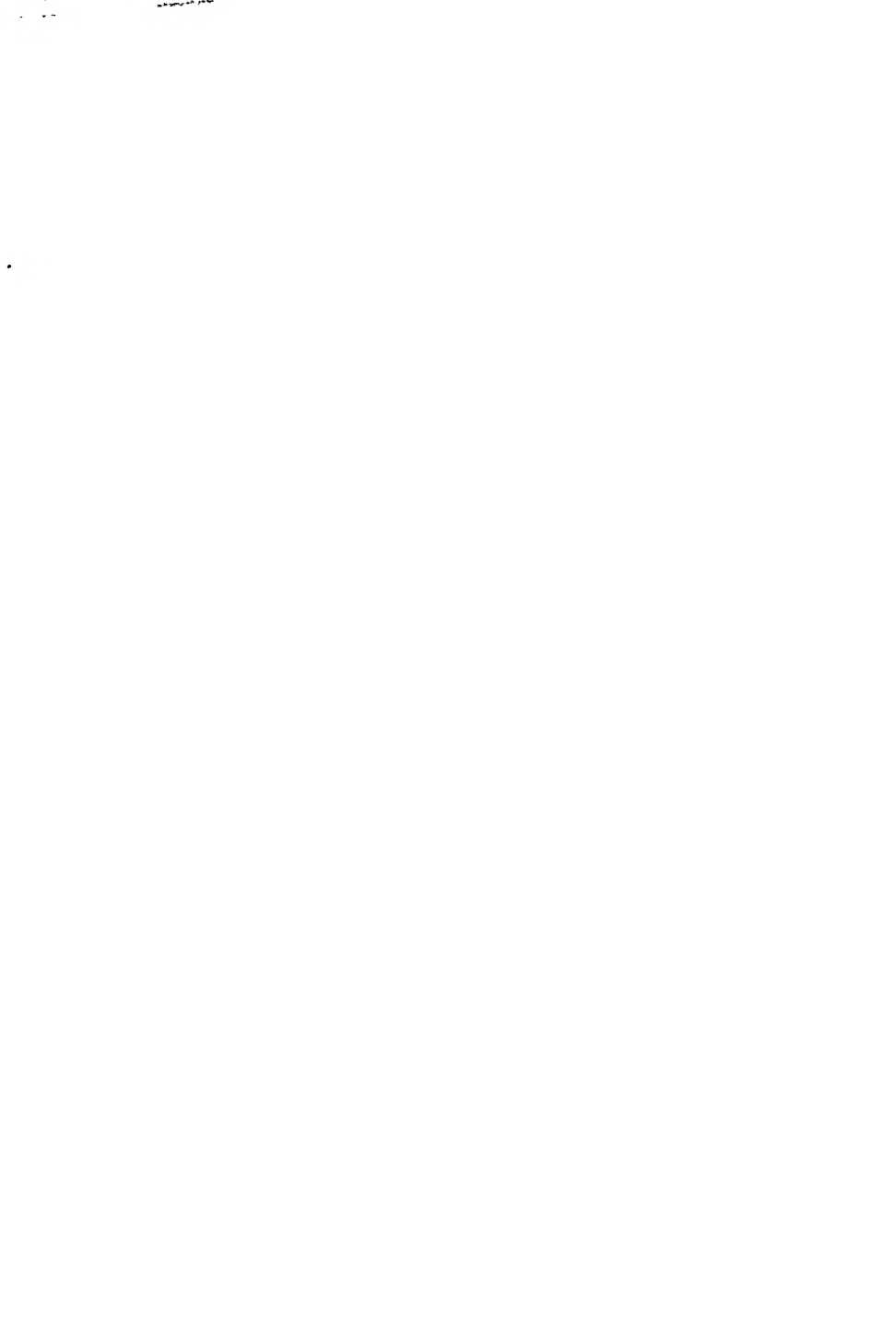
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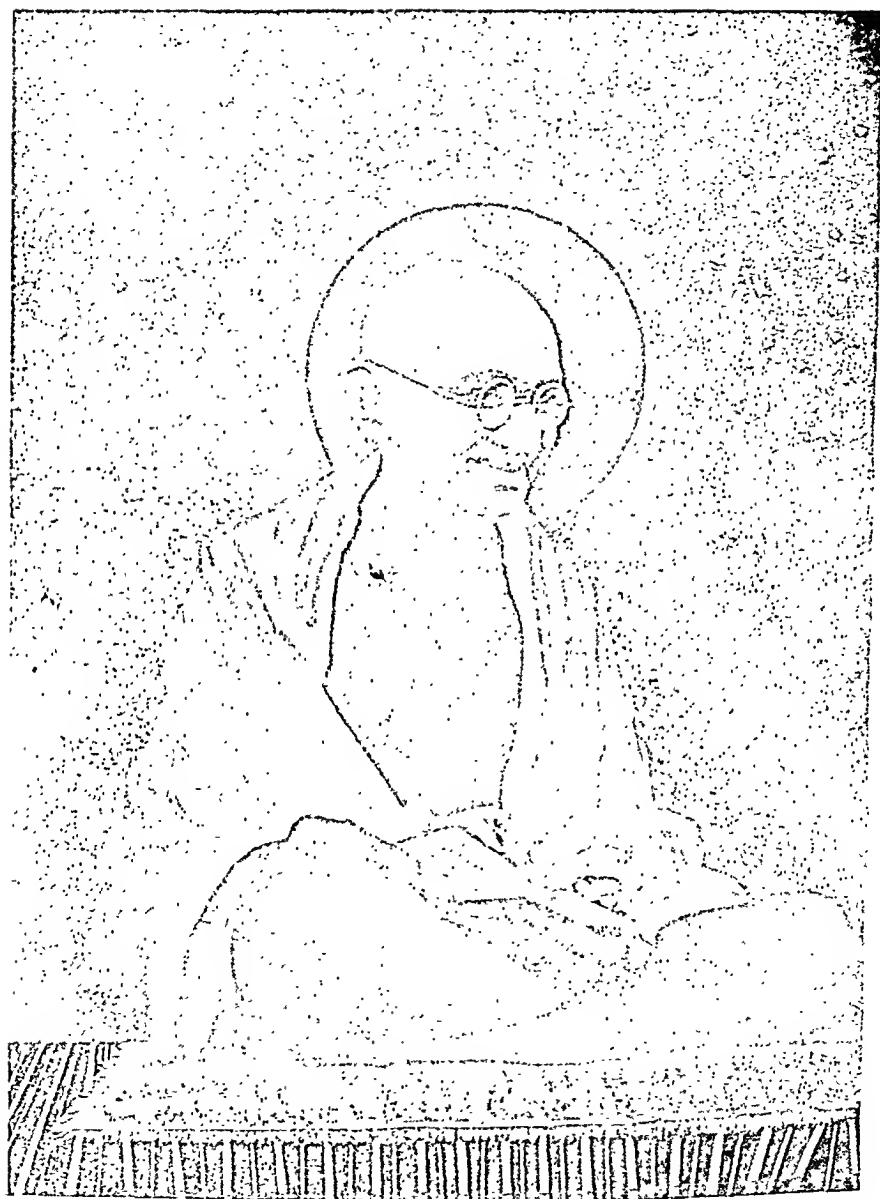
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# I have met Mahatma Gandhi

## After his death

### CHAPTER I

#### My mother's dream

I am the fourth child of my father. The first child was a son who died of cholera at the age of four. My mother became frantic when she lost her first child. The mother instinct in every woman is the strongest, and it is not fulfilled by the birth of one child only particularly in the case of Indian women who must get at least half a dozen children before they are even twenty years old.

After the death of the first child, my mother got two daughters but no son, and hence, she could not forget the loss of her first child. In Hindu families, a son is hailed as a boon from heaven because he helps to save not only his parents but fourteen preceding generations from hell, while a daughter is hailed as a curse because she

pulls down all the departed souls of her forefathers from heaven into hell and makes them lie there until a son comes to their rescue from eternal damnation.

Whatever was the superstition, my mother for full four years prayed to God for another male child, and during that interval, I have been told by my father that my mother used to hug and fondle to her breast whatever clothes or toys belonged to her lost child, and she used also to talk sometimes to the naked walls and to the empty air as if the child appeared before her in flesh and blood. Many a day, my father noticed her holding out her arms into nothing and folding them again as if she was embracing her lost child. She used to be absorbed in such a game in the kitchen, in the bath-room, in the bed-room and practically everywhere whenever she used to be slightly free from work.

One night she happened to dream a very strange dream. Some mysterious voice she heard in her sleep, which said to her, 'Look, there is a long staircase rising to a great height. Follow it and you will get whatever you desire. My mother at once followed the voice and began to climb the stairs but at

every step she stumbled and felt a great fatigue when she heard the voice calling her up to the higher steps. There was no end of the stairs. How long she climbed she did not know and yet she could not but climb on until at last she cried out most piteously, 'Help me, I can not climb any further.' At once, a luminous hand appeared before her eyes and clasping her sinking hands began to pull her up the stairs higher and higher. At last she reached the topmost stair which opened into a circular enclosure like the top of a tall tower. Just at that time, the luminous hand disappeared and the voice said to her, 'Do you see here the various fruits? Which would you like to have?' My mother even in sleep was surprised to find so many fruits in a basket at such a great height. She stared at all the fruits one by one and extended her fingers to pick up one of them. It was an orange, a big, bright and golden orange, just plucked from the tree. The moment she held the orange in her hands, the whole vision disappeared—the voice, the staircase, the top of the tower, the fruits and even the dream. The rays of the sun peeped through the window and flooded her bed.



She rubbed her eyes in order to make sure if she was still sleeping or waking. Instinctively she searched all the bed for the orange but there was nothing in her bed.

Within one year of that mysterious dream I was born!

**On the third day of my birth I cried out, 'Mamma' thrice**

In the *Mahabharat* it is written that Durjodhan cried out thrice like a donkey on the third day of his birth, and it was predicted by the astrologers that he would bring a great calamity to his family and ruin to his country. Everybody knows that Durjodhan brought about the battle of Kurukshetra which is immortal in the history of our country. The *Bhagavat Gita*, which is regarded as the book of the greatest philosophy of the Hindus, mentions the battle of Kurukshetra in which Arjuna and Lord Krishna took part in order to destroy the Kauravas.

I was born at Tamluk in the district of Midnapore in Bengal. It was the third day of my birth. I was lying by the side of my mother. It was early in the morning. My mother was perfectly wakeful. There

was also a nursing woman who attended my mother and who was quite awake when both she and my mother caught in their ear the distinct cry from my lips, 'mamma', not once but thrice. Both of them were extremely surprised and consulted each other to make sure if the cry came from my lips. There was no other soul in that room, not even a pussy which could mimic the cry of a human infant. The question is whether I cried, 'mamma' or made a meaningless sound as all infants do when they cry. My mother and the nurse both assured each other that the cry came from my lips and that it was not like any of those meaningless sounds which come from the infant lips. Another question is whether an infant of three days ever cries at all in the manner I cried on the third day of my birth. Let all mothers and nurses in the world answer the question.

Anyhow, my mother was very much perturbed by this incident of my cry. She had read the *Mahabharat* and the whole story about Durjodhan. She feared in her heart of hearts that I was born probably to ruin the family if not the whole country. But fortunately, I have lived fifty years of my life

and yet have not brought any calamity to my father's family. My parents are still alive. They can certify that no battle of Kurukshetra has been fought on my account. My countrymen also can certify that I am too small a person to bring about any ruin to my country like Hitler or any other evil genius.

### **My mysterious illness**

When I was just six months 'old I contracted a strange fever which lasted for full four years. It disappeared as mysteriously as it appeared. Can any physician in the world diagnose what kind of fever I had? I used to run very high temperature throughout the day and the night without any remission during the entire period of four years. Can any doctor in the world certify that a child or an adult can survive such a long period of high and continuous fever? And yet I am certifying that I have lived a strong and healthy life of half a century in spite of that fever.

### **Even poison could not kill me**

I do not remember the name of the doctor of Tamluk whose compounder once served for me a wrong prescription, a strongpoison instead of a healing drug. One of my

maternal uncles who was then a boy of fourteen happened to carry the medicine from the dispensary of the doctor. He was a very intelligent boy. He said to my mother, 'Look' this medicine smells too strong. How can such a small infant swallow such a strong medicine? Let me better run back to the dispensary and show the medicine to the doctor. My mother also smelt the medicine and found it giving out a very strong odour. But then, I had been running such a high temperature for so many days that my mother got tired of my illness. In a fit of sheer disgust and despair she said in reply 'Let God's will be done. Let me give the medicine.' I was given the medicine. In a few moments I began to cry and toss in the bed. My mother and my uncle both were very much alarmed. My uncle at once ran to the doctor with the bottle of the medicine. There were five doses left in the bottle. The moment the doctor examined the medicine he enquired most anxiously with dilated eyes, 'Have you given any dose to the child? This is a strong poison.' With these words he did not wait for the reply but ran at once with my uncle to see whether I was yet alive

or dead. I was not dead but after having suffered terrible agonies for nearly half an hour I lay perfectly still in a state of unconsciousness. The doctor examined my pulse and it was still beating. He wondered how I could be yet alive. He remained at my bedside for the whole day in order to watch the last reaction of the poison, and to his great amazement he found in the evening that the fever which had been sticking to my bones for the last four years suddenly disappeared. It was a miracle indeed. Since that fateful evening I began to recover very quickly and within six months I became a perfectly healthy child.

I am not a doctor. But I know this much that poison kills poison. I therefore believe sincerely that without that strong poison I could not have been cured of that deadly fever ever in my life. Nature works most mysteriously which all human knowledge fails to fathom.

### **The cobra guarded me in my sleep**

It was at Barisal when I was a boy of six, once in the night, while I was fast asleep in my bed, my mother was horrified to notice that a black cobra was coiling just over my

pillow with its hood above my forehead glistening in the light of the earthen lamp which was burning in a corner of the room. My mother did not know what to do. She dared not disturb the cobra or me any way lest the cobra in a fit of its habitual spite should bite me and I should be no more. He waked up my father who was also sleeping near by. My father also did not know what to do. But he suddenly thought of getting hold of his gun which was lying in the room. When he actually levelled the gun at the cobra, my mother cried out, 'Hold, hold! don't fire. The child may be killed. The cobra also may bite.' With these words, she quietly poured some milk from a bottle into a small cup and very cautiously kept the cup near about my bed. My father watched the action of my mother and wondered what she was doing. I was still then fast asleep. In a few moments, mysteriously enough, the cobra left my bed and slowly crawled near the cup. It dipped its hood into the cup. Just then my father fired his gun, and the hood of the cobra, the cup and all were blasted to pieces.

There is a superstition amongst the Hindus that if any snake happens to guard

a child in his sleep, he is destined to be a king or a monarch. But unfortunately, I am yet not wearing any crown.

## CHAPTER 11

### **My mother's hysteric fits**

Adolescent girls suffer from hysteric fits so long their menstruation is not regular or so long they are not married and become the mother of one child. That is the correct opinion of the medical authorities. But in every part of the world and particularly in the Oriental countries, the common people believe that the man or woman who suffers from hysteric fits is possessed by some evil spirit. Even the theosophists of America believe in the same theory.

I remember distinctly that even while I was a boy of ten or twelve my mother used to suffer frequently from hysteric fits. Hysteria was not in her family nor in her constitution. She had already borne six children and therefore, the medical reason also could not apply to her case. I noticed one thing in her hysteric fits. Whenever her feelings used to be badly wounded she at once used to have her fits. My father is a man of short temper, and he often injured my mother's



feelings on trifles. When the fit used to come it brought with it a terrible shaking of the whole body. I remember distinctly, my mother was perfectly conscious of the gradual approach of the fit, and she used to tell us that during the fit we must hold her body with as much might as we could call up, and actually, two or three of us together could not control the shaking of her body even while she was lying in the bed. We used to wrap her entire body with a thick blanket even in the hot days during the fit because she actually used to shiver with cold. Her teeth used to clinch like a vice and sometimes open and clatter in such a manner that we feared that she might chop her tongue with her teeth. When the fit came with its full violence she used to cry for water not by any articulate sound but by just opening her lips.

The strangest thing about her fit was that throughout the spasm she used to utter certain words which we could not understand. Most of the hysteria patients utter meaningless syllables but my mother's articulation seemed to be rhythmic and regularly accentuated, and hence, full of significance.

My father also used to notice this strange articulation of sounds which he failed to decipher. He once told us that she must be speaking a distinct language, and we must try to find it out. But it was not at least ten or twelve years afterwards that the opportunity for testing the hysteric language occurred. I was then reading in the B. A. class in the Government College at Dacca. A few Roman Catholic nuns were our next-door neighbours. One of the nuns was a good scholar of Latin. She used to visit our house at least once a week and used to explain the teachings of Christ to us. During those days one evening at about eight o'clock, my mother got her fit. I at once ran out to call the nun to watch my mother during the fit. She came and very keenly listened to the articulations of my mother. She told us with a very serious look in her eyes, 'She is speaking pure Latin.' But my mother did not know the alphabet of Latin. We enquired from the nun about the subject of our mother's hysteric language. She said that it was all about the art of painting. But my mother was absolutely innocent of painting.

It is still a mystery to us how our

mother could speak Latin and talk about the art of painting. We consulted some learned theosophist. He said that the human soul travels from body to body, and in the case of my mother, the soul of some Italian painter took possession of her body for a while during the fit. If this view is correct, Pythagoras must be also correct in his theory of the transmigration of the soul. But then, he used to believe that the soul travels from one body to another not in one lifetime but in another lifetime. &

### **My mother sees the vision of her niece**

My uncle Mr. A. C. Dutt worked for some years as Inspector of Schools at Hoshangabad in C. P. where once there was a violent outbreak of the epidemic of plague. His third child who was at that time a girl of sixteen died suddenly of plague. Myself and my parents were then at Dacca. The very night when my uncle's daughter died, she appeared before my mother just like the ghost of Hamlet's father. It was a moon-lit night. My mother having taken her dinner happened to go out of her room into the open courtyard for fetching something. It was probably ten o'clock in the night. My

mother was startled when suddenly her eyes were attracted by the vision of a beautiful girl hovering in the air at a considerable height. She was putting on a black sari to match her fair complexion. Her hair was interwoven and tied into a knot at the back of her head as is the style of the Bengali women to wear their hair. She wore a wreath of flowers on her hair. At first my mother could not recognise her face because she was hovering at a high altitude with her back turned to my mother. But soon she descended from her height almost to the level of our house, and my mother at once recognised her. She did not speak to my mother but simply turned her face to her. My mother instinctively cried out to her, 'Buli, how is it that you are here?' Buli greeted my mother with a smile and replied, 'You love me so much, aunty'. Didn't you want to see me?' My mother questioned her again, 'But how could you come in this fashion hanging in the air?' She again smiled, and replied, 'I have to go a long distance, and I am afraid, I may not be able to meet you again, and therefore, I have come to take leave of my aunty.' The vision melted

in the air as suddenly as it had appeared. Next morning a telegram came from my aunt to my mother carrying the message. 'Our dear Buli left us last night in tears.'

### **Prophetic dreams.**

The psychologists and the lay people both have recorded in every part of the world certain dreams which came true in actual life. Dr. Freud has given his own interpretation of dreams, and many other psychologists have given their interpretations of dreams in terms of the subconscious mind, which is yet a mystery to us.

Just a fortnight before the results of the Matriculation Examination of the Calcutta University came out, my mother told us one morning, 'I have seen a telegram in my dream last night in which it was clearly written that Shanti has passed the Matriculation Examination in the second division'. A telegram actually came from one of the friends of my father at Calcutta when the results of the Matriculation Examination were announced in the Senate Hall that my eldest sister Shanti had passed in the second division. It was not once but several times more afterwards practically

in the case of every one of my brothers and sisters and almost in every examination from the Matriculation to the M. A., my mother's dreams came out true to the last syllable. Let anybody in the world explain the mystery of human dreams. I have been a professor of Psychology as much as a professor of English literature and yet I confess that all the interpretations of human dreams advanced so far by the greatest psychologists in the world are probably entirely wrong.

**My youngest brother went mad.**

Lunacy is not in my family. My youngest brother Sasanka Kumar who was a brilliant Post-Graduate student of Science of the Dacca University suffered once very severely from an attack of typhoid fever. The doctors who treated him and saved him say that extreme cases of typhoid fever often derange the brain, blind the eyes, cripple some of the organs and the limbs. Whatever may be the real cause of the derangement of my brother's brain, the derangement followed immediately his recovery from typhoid fever. My brother was treated afterwards by many psychologists

and physicians of Allopathy, Homoeopathy, Ayurved and Naturopathy, and yet he could not be cured. At last some people suggested that he should be treated by some experts who deal with the spirits of the other world. None of us have any faith in good or evil spirits of the other world but my mother being completely despaired of the cure of my brother agreed to consult some such expert who deals with supernatural beings. I remember still the entire process of the treatment to which my brother was subjected.

1. An old fakir used to live under trees in sun and shower and exist on the broken crumbs of the passersby whoever happened to do him any charity out of superstition or feelings of humanity. This fakir was called one day to our house in the evening. My brother in the beginning was not a violent maniac. So, we could easily make him sit before the fakir as he desired it. The fakir looked into the eyes of my brother for a few minutes, and I felt that regular sparks of fire came out from the eyes of the fakir which completely benumbed the senses of my brother just as a snake is benumbed by the flute of a snake-charmer. My brother fell into

a fast sleep or rather into a state of unconsciousness. The fakir then put various questions to my brother who answered them promptly like a perfectly sane person. We were all extremely surprised. The fakir said to my brother, 'Who are you? Wherefrom have you come? Why are you troubling this young man?' My brother without opening his eyes replied, 'My husband was a dealer in herbs. He used to love another woman. When I came to know of this I severely rebuked my husband. My husband then one day made me drink the juice of a poisonous herb as the result of which I did not die but became mad. This young man was my husband in my previous life. I am now in complete possession of him, and that is why, he has gone mad. Nobody on earth can cure him unless he dies or is killed by somebody.' My mother and we all listened to the words with rapt attention and all the while wondered at the strange revelations. The fakir again put a question to my unconscious brother, 'But what are you these days and where are you living?' My brother promptly replied in his sleep, 'I am the wife of this young man and am living with him.'



The fakir suddenly burst into a fit of anger and said to my brother, 'You must leave him at once otherwise I am going to burn you alive.' My brother at once began to shriek and scream in agony and fear and cried out, 'Don't please turn me out from him. If I leave him I will die and he will also die.' At this reply, the fakir turned to my mother and said, 'You have listened to what he has been saying. If I go to cure him, he will have to die. So, let me know your wish.' My mother was extremely frightened. She said to the Fakir, 'Let him better remain as he is. What shall I do by curing his madness if he dies?' My brother is still alive and is in the very same condition as he was twenty years ago.

### **A mysterious sound in our house**

Ever since that treatment of my brother by the Fakir, a mysterious sound has been lingering in our house at Dacca. I left Bengal in 1927, and since then, I had been working in West Punjab and the North West Frontier Province, till the partition of India. But I used to visit my parents at Dacca almost every year during the summer vacation of my college. Once in the

afternoon while I was sitting in the verandah I heard a heavy thumping sound exactly above my head, and after a few moments, I felt distinctly that the sound was travelling from one corner of the roof of the verandah to the other. I took the sound to be the thumping by some big monkeys who used to infest our locality during those days because of the various fruit trees in every house. But when I enquired from my mother she said that it had nothing to do with the monkeys or with any human being. I therefore got very curious to trace out the real cause of the sound.

On several occasions afterwards whenever I heard the sound I at once ran to the roof of the house but could see no shadow of any monkey or any living creature upon the roof. Then I thought that the sound must be due to some sympathetic vibration of some other sound near about our house. But that also I verified and found out no cause of any such sympathetic vibration. Then I consulted some good civil engineers some of whom said that the sound was probably due to some defect of the roof or foundation of the building. Although I

know nothing of engineering yet the argument did not at all appeal to me. My question is, if the sound is due to any defect of the building, how can it travel from one corner to another and why does it occur at irregular intervals in the day or in the night?

Anyhow, the house is still there though now occupied by some Muslim who shifted recently from Chinsurah to Dacca and my parents also shifted along with my brother to the Muslim's house at Chinsurah. I can certify that the sound was lingering in our house at Dacca at least for fifteen years. If the sound is any way associated with my brother, it must now occur also in our house at Chinsurah where my brother is at present living with my parents. But at the time of relating this incident I have not got any report as yet from my parents about the sound. When I visit Chinsurah I will surely verify it.

## CHAPTER III

### My vision of the dead body of my grandmother

I was putting up in the Bali building on Cooper Road while I was working as Professor of English in Dyal Singh college at Lahore. One morning when I woke up from my sleep suddenly a vision came before my eyes. I was still lying in my bed. The vision was so clear and distinct that I could at once recognise it. I saw that my maternal grandmother was being carried in a bier. Her body except her face was covered all over with a white cloth, and the whole bier was strewn with flowers. They were all white flowers, and I distinctly felt their fragrance in my nose. The vision lasted for about three or four minutes. I was so much surprised to see such a vision that quite unconsciously I pushed my wife who was lying by my side and said, 'See, my grandmother is being carried in a bier.' My wife with her half-wakeful and half-sleepy eyes said, 'What should I see? I don't find any

thing.' She became perfectly wakeful when she had uttered those words. She again said to me, 'What do you mean? Where is your grandmother? She is not here. She is thousands of miles away. Are you dreaming or waking?' Before I could reply to her the vision had melted, and I kept quiet for some time just to make sure if I was really dreaming or waking as my wife had questioned me. When my wife found me speechless, she pushed my side and stared into my eyes, and feeling that I was perfectly awake said, 'What's wrong with you? What had you been talking about? What have you seen?' This time I replied to her, 'I am afraid, my grandmother is dead. I saw her dead body just now before my eyes.' My wife said, 'Have you gone mad?' My mind was so much disturbed that I did not like to argue with her. That very day I received a telegram that my grandmother had actually died. My wife was stunned to find that my vision had come true.

### **My daughter's blood-stained frock**

All my children were reading in Sacred Heart school at Lahore. One day at about two o'clock in the afternoon when I came

home to take my lunch, I took my seat in my reading-room. My wife always used to wait for me at the table. My lunch time was one-thirty. So, that day, because I was a little late, my wife as soon as she heard my footsteps shouted out to me, 'Come straight into the dining-room. I am awfully hungry. I can't wait a moment.' I merely listened to her words but did not reply any thing because while I was sitting before my reading desk, a vision disturbed my mind very much. Just on the wall before me I saw distinctly a vision of my eldest daughter Monju who was then a girl of eight or nine. The vision was as clear as an image in a mirror. I could see that Monju was standing before me rather in a state of fright and dejection and her frock was stained with blood. I rubbed my eyes twice in order to make sure if there was really anything before my eyes. There was no mistake about it because the vision stood on the wall for about two or three minutes. I was so much absorbed with the vision that I was not aware how many times my wife had been calling me from the dining-room until at last she appeared just in front

of me chiding me in her characteristic manner, 'Are you dreaming of any of your blooming girl students that you have forgotten totally your food and drink? I can't keep fasting for the whole day for your sweet darlings. You better chuck off your job tomorrow and sit at home. I will not allow you to be a philosopher at my expense.'

My wife's sharp tongue at once brought me back to the world and I had to say something in reply but in a very anxious tone, 'I don't feel like taking my lunch now. I am completely upset by the vision. I don't know what has happened to Monju.' The very mention of the name of Monju made my wife forget every thing else in the world. She at once questioned me more anxiously, 'What has happened to Monju? Has she come back from the school?' I then calmly repeated the words, 'I saw a vision just now on the wall here before my reading-desk in which I found Monju looking frightened and dejected and her frock stained with blood. I don't know if any accident has happened to her.' At the very name of accident my wife urged me at once

to run to Sacred Heart School to see what had really happened. Before my wife had given the suggestion I had already decided to ring up Sister Mary and enquire about Monju.

Just when I was stepping out of my house, I saw Monju on the road coming from her school. My heart leapt up with joy. I at once shouted back to my wife, 'Monju is coming.' My wife too came out of the house to meet Monju on the road. When Monju came near us, we noticed that her frock was stained with blood. I at once enquired, 'What's wrong with your frock?' Monju replied in a tone of fright and sorrow, "Dad, you don't know, a girl of our class has been knocked down by our school bus in our very school compound. Poor soul, her head came under the wheel and was smashed. When I saw it I ran to her, and that is why, my frock is stained with blood."

### **The shadows of visitors**

Believe it or not, on two or three occasions, while I was sitting at home, I saw the vision of certain persons at least half an hour before they had come to visit me.



They were absolute strangers to me. Once, while I was having tea with my wife in the afternoon, I suddenly said to her, 'I must get ready. Somebody is coming to see me.' My wife thought, somebody had made a previous appointment to meet me. But I explained to her, 'I don't know the man who is coming to see me. He appeared before me just now in a vision.' My wife, though she was aware of my prophetic visions, said, 'Nonsense! Can you describe the man who is coming to see you?' I at once said recollecting the vision, 'Yes, he is dark-looking, fatty, dwarfish and limping.' I was myself surprised and my wife no less taken aback when a visitor of the very same description stepped into my sitting-room after half an hour of the vision.

Another day rather a little late in the evening when I had just finished my dinner, I felt before my eyes the shadow of a Sikh gentleman tall, slim and very decently dressed, I could not recognise his face. I said to my wife, 'I am afraid, I can't retire to bed now. Somebody is coming to see me.' My wife had already got tired of my visitors—students, professors, book-sellers,

and all sorts. Naturally, she said, 'Let any body come. I will send a message that you have already retired to bed.' Although she said these words yet in her heart of hearts she had the curiosity to see if this time also my vision came true. Therefore, she enquired of me what the visitor would be like. I gave her the description of the man as I saw it in the vision. My wife waited for the visitor more anxiously than I did. At last when the visitor arrived both of us were equally surprised that this time also the vision came true.

On another occasion, when I was lying ill for some days, many of my friends and relatives came to visit me, to attend me in the sickbed and also to enquire about my health. One evening one of my professor friends was chatting with me in my bed-room. During the course of our conversation my mind was suddenly distracted by the vision of a visitor. I said to my professor friend, 'Do you believe in clairvoyance?' He said, 'I am not a lunatic.' I said, 'I will show you today that there is something like that.' He enquired, 'But how?' I told him that in half an hour or so, somebody will come

to see me.' He burst into a laughter and said, 'So many people may come to see you but what has it got to do with clairvoyance?' I said, 'I am not talking of any and every visitor who may accidentally drop in or even of those who are likely to visit me to enquire about my health. Just now while I was chatting with you I saw a vision. The man who is going to visit me in half an hour or so is a Muslim. He probably belongs to Northwest Frontier Province because he is putting on the dress of a Pathan. If you care to sit here for half an hour you can test the truth of my words.' My friend at once said, 'Something must be wrong with your head. It is but natural when you are lying in bed for so many days. I will certainly wait till midnight to see the fun though I am sure, I will be completely disappointed.' The clock struck nine, and just then my boy-servant brought the message that somebody wanted to see me. My friend stared at me curiously. I said to him, 'Here comes the man. You can meet him yourself if you still disbelieve in my clairvoyance.' My friend at once ran to the drawing-room and was extremely

surprised to see a Muslim gentleman wearing a Pathan's dress exactly of the same description as I had given. After having dismissed the visitor with an apology that I was lying ill he returned to me and said, 'By Jove, are you really a prophet or you have played a trick with me?' I said, 'I myself never believed in clairvoyance and even now I don't know how my visions always come true. But, my friend, I often feel that there is something about the human soul which probably can see the past, the present and the future. I have come to believe now that this universe is a living soul, and our individual soul being but a portion of the living universe can often come to see and feel things which appear to be otherwise hidden from us!'

#### **How once I avoided a railway collision**

Everybody remembers the horrid railway collision of the Calcutta Mail and some other goods train on the E. I. R. near Belur. I was then at Lahore. One morning, just one day before the railway collision I received a telegram from Dacca that my mother was suffering from Cholera. That very evening I was announced in the papers to

deliver a public lecture in the Lajpat Rai Hall. I decided to cancel my lecture though I knew, it would put me in a very awkward position in the eyes of the public. But then, I loved my mother more than anything else in the world. I asked my wife to pack up my things in a suit case and I got ready to catch the Calcutta Mail in the evening. I had taken my heavy tea in the afternoon and asked one of my servants to get a tonga. I was waiting most anxiously for the tonga thinking all the while of my mother. My eyes were heavy with tears. I feared in my heart of hearts that I might not be able to see my mother alive. My wife tried to console me in many ways. But I felt very restless in my heart of hearts. I began to pace up and down the drawing-room and sometimes peeped through the window to see if the tonga had arrived. Just during those moments of anxiety and pain, all of a sudden a very loud report of a heavy crash came into my ears, and with that crash came the cries of agony. I felt as if there was the fall of a mountain which came toppling down over my head and I actually cried out in a fit of acute pain and horror, 'Help me.' My

wife ran to my side and said, 'what has happened?' I did not answer to her question but, on the other hand, my eyes were fixed on a vision of horror which haunted me for a few moments. I saw distinctly that two big railway engines with their long trains dashed against each other at a hurricane speed and were turned to matchwood splinters. Two of the engines were lying like two tired monsters a good length away from the rail roads. Many of the bogies were hurled down the embankments with their roofs and wheels and seats into a mass of debris along with hundreds of human skeletons buried under them. Some of the bogies which were standing on the rail roads were in flames. My ear caught the piercing cries of agony which seemed to rend the sky. Even in that pitch darkness I could see the dismembered bodies of the passengers—men, women and children—all scattered like carcasses in the battlefield.

How long I remained absorbed in that horrid vision I do not know but the voice of my wife again brought me back to myself. She clasped me with her arms and said, 'The tonga has come but I will not let you go.' I

kept quiet for sometime and then related the whole vision to her. She said imploringly, 'You must not go this evening. I fear, some calamity is coming to us. May God save your mother!' My mind was extremely disturbed and I really could not leave Lahore that evening nor could I deliver my public lecture.

Next day, to our great surprise, we found the news of the railway collision published in the papers. However, I left for Dacca two days afterwards and saw with my own eyes the havoc of the accident near Belur. When I reached Dacca I found that my mother was perfectly hale and hearty and never suffered from cholera. My parents and brothers and sisters were all surprised to meet me so unexpectedly. When I talked about the telegram, they found out that it was sent not by any of them but by my brother whose brain was deranged.

## CHAPTER IV

### In no man's land

It was probably in the month of march or April in 1947, when communal disturbances broke out in a very mild form in some parts of the North West Frontier Province. Hazara district was the hot-bed of the Muslim Leaguers, and it was from this district that the real trouble began. But due to the Khan brothers the disturbances could not spread like a wild fire as it did in some parts of the Punjab and East Bengal.

I was then working as the principal of the Sanatan Dharma college at Bannu, the second city in N. W. F. P, in military and civil importance. Bannu was a walled-up city which had six big gates. Most of these gates used to be under lock and key twenty four hours and heavily guarded by the Military-police and the soldiers. One of the gates was connected with Bannu cantonment which used to be kept open upto six o'clock in the evening, and no body used to be permitted to pass through that gate except on



a special pass. Such heavy invigilation by the police and the soldiers was necessary because Bannu was surrounded by no man's land which was known as Waziristhan. The walls of the city were surrounded with barbed wires for a distance of about fifty yards, and any body whoever happened to cross those perimetre wires would do so at his own risk because the Wazirs, the Masoods, the Mamonds and the Afridis used to lurk about in the neighbourhood in the day or in the night to get an opportunity of kidnapping the rich Hindu merchants of the city with a view to realise a heavy sum of ransom from their relatives. I came to know from the residents of Bannu as well as of other neighbouring towns that the whole mischief of kidnapping the Hindus by the tribes people was engineered by the Britishers, otherwise the tribes people with all their barbarous and ferocious nature were really very good people at heart. Many of the students of my college belonged to the ferocious tribes but I found them most faithful and honest in all their dealings. Of course, they were extremely ignorant and superstitious and also hard-pressed with hunger, and there-

fore, whoever wanted to misguide them with lies could do so very easily.

I distinctly remember how the walled-up city was raided by the tribes people twice or thrice during my time inspite of the heavy military police and the soldiers of the Bannu brigade stationed in the cantonment. I remember also how some of the Masood chaprasis and Waziri students of my college helped me during the raid with their rifles and guns. I remember also how during the communal disturbances my Pathan and Wazir students drove away the Muslim Leaguers of the Frontier province who came to the Bannu city to create trouble. General K. M. Cariappa was then in charge of the Bannu brigade but he had left for England before the disturbances broke out with violence. General Cariappa, in those days was most popular amongst the civilians and the army people. I invited him several times to my college to give talks to my boys on military subjects. I feel proud of my past association with General Cariappa who is now the Commander-in-Chief of our Dominion.

Brigadier Carew stepped into the shoes of General Cariappa, and it was during his

time that the disturbances broke out with some amount of violence. In the month of May, 1947, I considered it necessary to close my college for the Summer vacation by sending a telegram to the Vice-chancellor of the Punjab University. Before I had left Bannu on the 31st of May, I came to know that the 'V. B. college at Dera Ismail Khan had been burnt to ashes by the Muslim Leaguers with whom some of the British officers were in league. Before leaving Bannu I had been receiving letters from my wife at Lahore that many of the Sikhs and the Hindus had started leaving the city because of the communal disturbances. But I did not take the matter seriously till then, partly because I felt sure like many others that Lahore would be excluded from Pakistan, and partly because after having lived in no man's land for some time under occasional showers of bullets I took Lahore disturbances as a mere *tamasha*, and actually when I landed at Lahore on the first of June, I freely walked through the streets even in the dark without any fear although at that time every corner of the roads was infested with the stabbers and many houses were set on fire.

### Lahore in August, 1947.

At Lahore before my arrival, there had been repeated disturbances at irregular intervals of two or three weeks, and therefore, some of the citizens of Lahore like myself did not take the disturbances seriously. The locality in which I lived was a very respectable corner in the civil lines and yet I noticed on my arrival there that many of the houses had been already vacated by the Hindus and Sikhs. My wife naturally got sufficiently alarmed and grew very anxious to leave Lahore as early as possible. But I having<sup>a</sup> breathed the air of Waziristhan for some time decided not to leave Lahore at least before the university examinations of my children were over.

It was on the 8th of August the disturbances broke out again with considerable violence. I remember distinctly how in the morning of that day, I wanted to go out to deposit a few hundred rupees with the Imperial Bank of India. My wife warned me several times not to go out because any moment I might be stabbed on the way even while going in a tonga. But I did not listen to her warning as I was completely fearless

and also considerably obstinate by nature. I was just going to climb down the stairs when suddenly a vision came before my eyes. It was a vision of the General Post Office, the Telegraph Office, and the Imperial Bank of India, all of which stood near one another on the Mall. I saw clearly a crowd of people throwing brickbats at one another. Some two or three persons I found suddenly dropping down on the pavement of the Mall and jets of blood coming out from their neck, back and shoulders. For a moment I shuddered at the vision. An unusual terror came into my heart, and at once I climbed up the stairs, and stepped into my sitting-room. My wife had been watching me anxiously because a moment ago I was going out of my house against her will. I said to my wife, 'I am afraid, I dare not go out now. Just now I saw the whole picture of the disturbances but I wonder if they have broken out at all.' Within an hour or so, the news spread through the whole city like a wild fire that many persons had been stabbed and battered to death near the G. P. O.

God saved me that day most miraculously. Had I not seen the vision I would have gone

out positively and would have been caught in the whirlpool of the riot. I found God's hand another way too. Had I been able to deposit those few hundred rupees with the Imperial Bank on the 8th of August, I could have never escaped with my family by air on the 3rd of September, because after the 8th of August for full three weeks Lahore became a regular theatre of war, both open and underground, without even a moment's peace. The old city of Lahore was caught in the blaze first because it was a heavily congested area with narrow lanes and alleys which served as the best ambush for the stabbers. But our civil lines were comparatively safe because the roads were broad and the houses were scattered. Even then, I dared not go out of my house except on very urgent jobs. My father-in-law also lived in the civil lines hardly half a mile away from me and yet for two weeks none of us could contact each other even during the day time.

I have read of the London fire in history but I cannot imagine if that fire was half so devastating as the Lahore fire. Every night and day, fifty, sixty, hundred houses

used to blaze up with flaming tongues of fire which shot up to thousands of feet high in the sky sending out clouds of smoke that completely overcast the sky. In the night it was a great spectacle. Even in the pitch darkness of the midnight, it seemed as if millions of torches were burning while in the broad daylight the sun was almost invisible because of the mountains of smoke rising incessantly from the bosom of the city and enveloping every corner of the heavens. From the top of my house on Cooper Road I could command a distinct view of the old city of Lahore writhing and coiling in the burning flames like a huge monster with the numberless old and new buildings and their agonised dwellers. No body can count how many thousands of men, women and children were roasted alive and how many crores of rupees of precious goods were reduced to ashes in that universal havoc.

**A voice spoke into my ears.**

How I passed those three weeks of August I can not describe in language. Every day, every hour, nay, every moment seemed to me a century of lingering torture.

Although my house was located in a very respectable and safe corner yet I felt that I was surrounded by enemies on all sides. My next-door neighbours had already left their houses and a few others were watching their opportunities every moment for clearing out of that hell fire. Had I been alone, I would have little cared for my personal safety. But I had my wife, two grown-up daughters, three young children and one son who was hardly seventeen years old. Fortunately, before the 8th of August I had stocked a little ration of rice, wheat, lintels, oil and ghee, otherwise my family of eight souls would have been literally starved to death within a week's time. But how long could that little ration last? When it was exhausted, myself and my big son used to go out by turns to the nearest shops so that if one were stabbed, the other could save the family.

But there was no question of saving. I booked one compartment twice by the Calcutta Mail and twice I got my reservation cancelled with penalties because I was not prepared to see my whole family being butchered on the way from Cooper Road



to the Railway station or on the railway platform or even in the moving train as I came to know that several trains were held up a few miles away from the Lahore station and all the passengers completely massacred. So, I decided to stay on in my own house and there to meet our end together any moment in the day or in the night. Twice the Muslim National guards attempted to set fire to my house at midnight but as I had heavily tipped the police constables on petrol duty in my locality, my silver saved my family twice from being roasted alive. Sometimes, when I or my big son used to go out to get our ration of wheat or some vegetables from the neighbouring shops, some of the hungry eyes around us used to enquire about us, 'Who are these fellows? Should we finish them off?' We used to shudder at their whispers but some of our old Muslim shop-keepers used to say in reply to the queries of those hungry wolves, 'No, they are our friends.'

In the nights none of us except the little children could have any wink of sleep. Although we knew, there was no defence, no escape if our house was raided as many of

the houses in the civil lines had been raided, yet because we did not want to be butchered unawares, so we used to keep awake throughout the night from day to day, from week to week.

It was on the 18th of August my father-in-law came in his car to my house and dropped my mother-in-law at my place. I was told that on the 14th of August my eldest brother-in-law along with a few other respectable young men were arrested by the police and were lying in the Central Jail for their trial on a charge of murder. Of course, the charge was entirely bogus. The real reason behind their arrest by the police was that they refused to vacate their own houses when the police wanted to occupy the houses for some purpose. My father-in-law in spite of my warning used to live in the house all alone when all other neighbouring houses had been completely deserted, and to add to my anxiety further, he used to move about visiting the police officials for the release of my brother-in-law and other young men who were lying in the lock-up. My father-in-law was also a police official but a pensioner. No body listened to his

arguments or appeals because soon after the 14th of August most of the friends of my father-in-law in the Police department had gone out of West Punjab.

It was on the 27th of August, my father-in-law went to attend the District Magistrate's court to watch the case of his son. He did not return home that day till six o'clock in the evening, and naturally, my mother-in-law became very anxious for him. I feared in my heart of hearts that he must have been stabbed on the road. What a horrid night of anxiety we all passed that day. My father-in-law never returned nor my brother-in-law. My mother-in-law grew frantic with the darkest misgivings of her heart. I also lost my patience. I at once heavily tipped a Muslim who was a salesman in the Singer Sewing Machine Company and sent him on the 28th August with a letter to my brother-in-law in the Central Jail enquiring about him and his father. Simultaneously I sent one of my brave old students to the house of my father-in-law on Nicholson Road. After sometime both of them returned carrying deadly news. My student reported that the house of my father-in-law

had been completely looted and occupied by some Muslim refugees, and there was no trace of my father-in-law in the house. The Muslim fellow brought a letter from a young man lying mortally wounded in the Medical College Hospital. He wrote to me, 'Your father-in-law, your brother-in-law and twelve other undertrial prisoners were stabbed to death immediately after their release in the verandah just in front of the Magistrate's court-room and before the gun men. I have also been stabbed twice and am lying in the hospital now.'

I concealed all the news from my family except from my big son. I invented all sorts of ingenious lies to console my mother-in-law. As the month of August was drawing to its close I was losing every hope of saving my family. It was really a desperate position. One day I went to Felitis Hotel to book our passage by air to Delhi. But there was such a keen struggle for life that even after having paid the fair in advance, I could not get a single seat till the 3rd of September. I was running like a mad man for three or four days to Felitis Hotel to see if there was any room for my family

in any of the dakotas. It was not the question of one seat but nine seats, and hence, it seemed to be an impossible game.

On the 3rd of September, I literally lost the balance of my mind. There were probably very few families at Lahore lying stranded like mine. I tried all my resources for evacuation. I proposed to my wife and children if they would like to go to the refugee camp of the D. A. V. College as the last resort but they all said that they would like to die together in their own house rather than be stabbed and butchered on the road while going to the refugee camp. I sent many express telegrams to some of my relatives who were in the Air Force at Delhi to rescue my family by their military planes but none of my telegrams ever reached them. I approached the Officer Commanding of the Dogra Regiment in order to give a lift to my family from Lahore to Amritsar but it was too late as the Indian regiment was just then preparing for lifting their tents from the Lahore Area. I tried also to contact some of my big Christian Missionary friends but all of them unfortunately had already left Lahore. So, my position

was indeed a very desperate position. Day and night I racked my brain to find some way out. For some hours in the night I prayed to God with all the might of my soul. I said to him with tears of blood flowing from my very heart, 'O God, I do not want any thing from you except conveying my wife and children to some corner of India and leaving them there even absolutely naked and dying of starvation. I will never demand anything from you in future even if myself or my wife or any of my children happens to be in their last breath. I have never prayed to you in such a manner as I am doing now.' I do not remember what happened to me at that moment, whether I was in a trance or in a perfect state of unconsciousness or caught in a fit of insanity, but I heard a distinct voice in my ear which spoke to me, 'Do not worry any more. Your wife and children will be perfectly safe. They will be carried on the wings of angels'. As the voice spoke, my eyes were suddenly dazzled by a glorious light which trembled into wings of a bird that hovered for a moment before my eyes and then melted. I cried out to my wife,

‘We are saved! We are saved!’ My wife feared that my brain had positively gone out of its hinge when she found me crying with tears in my eyes and repeating those words, ‘We are saved! We are saved!’.

This incident occurred on the night of the 2nd September. In the morning of the 3rd September I ran to Felitis Hotel again. Mr. Parris, the Superintendent of the National Air Ways, was sitting in his office. I darted into his office-room and said to him in a fit of excitement, ‘I have got the permission for taking off my family to-day.’ Mr. Parris stared at me with wondering eyes but instinctively replied to me, ‘Yes, you are taking off to-day.’ After a few moments I burst into tears and said to Mr. Parris again, ‘My father-in-law, my brother-in-law, all have been stabbed to death. My family is also going to be blasted. Pray, save them.’ I do not know what happened to me or to Mr. Parris at that moment but I distinctly remember that Mr. Parris asked me to get my family ready within half an hour for conveying them to the aerodrome. I ran back immediately to my house and exactly within half an hour my family

was in Felitis Hotel. We were picked up by the National Air Ways car and conveyed to the aerodrome. We waited at the aerodrome till six o'clock. One big dakota landed from Delhi. When it was gliding down from the air and perching on the runaways, its silver wings flashed before my eyes like that glorious light which I had seen in my trance, and a voice spoke into my ears, 'Have faith in me. I am always with you'. For a moment my body and soul were thrilled with an unknown ecstasy. I do not remember what happened next but I found myself and my family lifted up in the air at a height of fifteen thousand feet.



## CHAPTER V

### Three days before the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi

When I landed at Delhi, I had no money in my pocket except three or four hundred rupees which fortunately the police spared me at the Lahore aerodrome. Had I not been sheltered by my relatives, my family would have literally starved in a month's time. I remember the days when thousands of the Hindu and Sikh refugees, who landed at Delhi having lost their all in the West Punjab and the North West Frontier Province, were lying on the open pavements, on the railway station platforms, in the temples and the ruined buildings throughout the coldest months of December, January and February huddled together with their women and children half-naked or in tattered rags and having no future except lingering death by starvation although our Government had opened two or three refugee camps in various corners of Delhi. But how many

thousands of human souls uprooted from their native soil and completely ruined in body, mind, and all worldly assets could be sheltered in the refugee camps, and how long could any government in the world feed so many hungry millions? But I take off my hat to the brave and heroic sons and daughters of the Punjab who inspite of their utter helplessness never begged their food or shelter from any body like any of the other races of our country in similar or much less miserable plight. Their men, women and children-all secured or created some kind of work for their existence. From Darya Ganj to Chandny Chawk, and from Chandny Chawk to Sabjimandi, and even round the most respectable Connaught Circus in New Delhi, I could find from early morning right upto ten o'clock in the night, the men, women and children of the land of the five rivers selling fruits, vegetables, cloth and all sorts of small trinkets for our daily household use. What margin of profit they could get, who purchased their wares, wherefrom they secured their small capital, I always wondered though I was myself a refugee.

Within a month of my landing I found the whole city of Delhi buzzing with life. I had visited Delhi many a time before the partition but it had appeared always to me as a dead city inspite of the Imperial Secretariat, inspite of the brilliant gallery of shops in Connaught Circus, inspite of the majestic Vice-regal Lodge and the various officials, clerks and chaprasis. Due to the presence of the Punjabees, Delhi wore a new look—a look of life, masculine vitality, and decency. Let any body visit Connaught Circus of today and compare it with the Connaught Circus of yesterday, and let him honestly certify if he does not feel a world of difference between now and then.

But I am not a Punjabee although I was domiciled in the Punjab for more than twenty years. Like all typical Bengalees and Madrasees I am incapable of earning my living except by holding some job. But jobs are not easily available particularly when so many thousands of people are thrown out of their jobs and made completely homeless. Yet I visited every office, every institution, and approached every one of the big and small persons whoever was

known to me. In hunting jobs also the Punjabees are more competent than the Bengalees. I found that most of my young and elderly friends of the Punjab secured some job or other and yet I could not secure any. I used to visit Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee almost every second day because I was known to him a little, and yet no job came to me. Even a person like Lady Mountbatten recommended me for many jobs and yet luck did not favour me. Any body else with such recommendations and also with such qualifications as I possess should have secured a very good job. But jobs do not always depend upon qualifications or even upon personal recommendations. I have to be a fatalist because I have seen so many brilliant people not getting any position worthy of their talents while so many others who deserve nothing hold key positions in government and private services. I have seen also that it is not merely hard work which always brings its reward nor is it personality alone which makes a mark in life. I am afraid, there is always some unseen hand which governs the destiny of each of us in small or big

affairs, and we are driven irresistibly by that mysterious hand to achieve or miss our goal.

For three months I moved heaven and earth to get a job at Delhi but all in vain probably because I was either trying for the wrong jobs or I was aiming too high. Anyhow, I still went on visiting the big guns and the small guns and throwing applications right and left in the air. One day while I was returning in the evening from Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee's bungalow on Barakhamba Road, I felt so much dejected at heart and disgusted with my life that I wanted to run away from this world and put an end to the struggle. But I was not a man to commit suicide as one of the senior professors of the D. A. V. College, Lahore, actually committed suicide in a fit of despair when he failed to get a job after having moved heaven and earth like myself at Delhi. I consider suicide a mental disease, and from the moral point of view also I regard it as an act of cowardice.

Anyhow, while I was returning from Dr. Mookerjee's place, I was thinking all the time about the great national calamity

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which was due entirely to the partition of India. I argued within myself how Mahatma Gandhi could accept partition particularly when he had fought all his life for the independence of undivided India. I wondered also how after the partition he could sacrifice the interests of the Hindus for the interests of the Muslims even when he knew that India was divided on the communal basis. I never doubted for a moment that Mahatma Gandhi was a sincere patriot of our country or never thought that he was a friend to the Muslims and an enemy to the Hindus. But I was reminded one by one of every one of his great acts of friendship and benevolence which he had done in favour of his Muslim brothers in India when the whole country was acutely feeling the sufferings of the Punjab and the Bengal refugees. But I could not reconcile myself to one thing. I put a question within myself as if standing in presence of Mahatma Gandhi and addressing him in a fit of excitement, 'If you were born to preach the creed of non-violence in a world of violence, why did you not retire into the Himalayas and meditate like Lord Buddha or go about like

Jesus Christ in the wilderness to preach the gospels instead of fighting for the freedom of your country? You have declared the Britishers your friends and the Muslims your brothers. But have you ever considered what they have done to your country which you have loved all your life dearer than your wife and children and more precious than your own life? You wanted to save bloodshed by giving away a portion of your motherland in peace to your younger brothers. But have you been able to save it? Look, how we are bleeding, groaning and gasping. Would you say that we are paying the price of liberty? What liberty have we gained by chopping our limbs from our body? No nation in the world gained her liberty like this. Do you sincerely believe, your *ahimsa* has triumphed over the *himsa* of your enemies? Would human history record it as a triumph or a defeat?’

It was eight o'clock in the evening. My body and mind were so much tired that my legs stumbled almost at every step, my vision was clouded with dark shadows, and my heart began to sink. There was not a single soul breathing on the road which I

was treading. I wanted to sit somewhere on the roadside and wait for any vehicle that could give me a lift to Darya Ganj. Just at that moment, I heard a loud report of gun shots. I counted one, two, three. I do not know wherefrom it came. But a moment afterwards, as clear as a picture on the screen, Mahatma Gandhi appeared before my eyes. The whole of the Birla Mandir flashed for a moment like a shivering reflection in water. Mahatma Gandhi, I clearly saw, was greeting a vast crowd with his folded hands. But a moment afterwards, I found him stooping forward and sinking on the ground. I heard distinctly a loud uproar in my ears, and then, every thing was perfectly still.

My mind was very much disturbed although I thought within myself that probably because I had been constantly thinking of Mahatma Gandhi, so my heated brain was haunted by some hallucination. Hallucination, dream or vision, whatever it was, I could not follow what it signified until that black-letter day, the 30th of January, 1948.

**The black-letter day:—**My wife and child-



ren stayed at Delhi for about two months under the shelter of one of my relatives. But how long can relatives shelter a big family of eight members particularly in these hard days when food, cloth, and every thing is rationed and when in every part of India there is such an acute problem of accommodation? Besides, the persons who are sheltered by their relatives during misfortunes feel very much humiliated inspite of the loving care they receive from their benefactors. Any how, I split up my family into two or three batches and scattered them to Patna, Lucknow and other cities wherever they were welcome. I am very fortunate and also feel very proud of my relatives that they sheltered my family quite comfortably and ungrudgingly for at least six months before I could secure a job.

I visited Delhi again in the month of January, 1948, because I was called for interview by the Government of India for various jobs in the Information, Education, and other departments. Lady Mountbatten had been backing me always. I have come in touch with many English men and women in India but I have never come across such

a kind, generous and sympathetic soul as Lady Mountbatten. To be very frank, I had absolutely no claims on her favour because I have had no opportunity of serving her on any occasion. It was through my eldest daughter that I came in touch with her. My eldest daughter was in touch with Lady Pamela Mountbatten. While my daughter was putting up at 95, Darya Ganj at Delhi, she was invited by Lady Pamela Mountbatten to tea one evening at the Government House. My daughter is probably one of the few fortunate Indian girls who could win the love and affection of Lady Mountbatten and her daughter. I can never forget the words of Lady Mountbatten which she wrote to me when she left our country in April, 1949. Probably it was due to her sincerest wishes that I got a foothold again after that great catastrophe in the Punjab. One thing I have seen not only of Lady Mountbatten but practically of every English man and woman that they are true to their word, that whatsoever they promise they always honour it, and that they go to any length in order to help any body who truly deserves their help. I do not certain-

ly regret that the English people have quitted our land and have made us politically free but I can never forget the character and virtues of the English people or what they have done for us willingly or unwillingly. I am afraid, Indians will take centuries to acquire those virtues which truly make a great nation. When I say this, I forget altogether the political dealings of the English people to us during the past two hundred years. I remember only the personality, the sense of justice, the capacity for administration and discipline, and above all, the high culture of the English people—all of which have made us what we are to-day. We must not forget that the great leaders of our country, if they are now successfully piloting our country, have derived their talent and capacity entirely from their English education, English culture, and English outlook on public affairs. What a pity it is that India is trying to forget even the English language through which we have learnt all the sciences, all the arts, all the histories, politics and economics of the world. I wish, my countrymen might realise, sooner than they have the occasion to regret,

the suicidal policy which they are following now in discarding the English language, which is the only greatest international language in the world and without which none of the Eastern or the Western countries can ever acquire any international status. When I think, on the other hand, how slavishly we are still following all the conventions of civil and military administration and legislation in all their details, and when I see also how most of the leaders of our country connected with government or private affairs taking pride and delight secretly or openly in the English ways, English methods, English ideals, and English manners, I can not but be conscious of the absurdity of the whole position. I can certainly follow the psychology of both the trends of our minds. It is because of our two centuries of political subjection under the British rule that we have developed such a strong antagonism towards every thing English, while on the other hand, due to the actual superiority of the English race, of English culture, of the English methods of administration and legislation, and even of the English ways of life that we inly feel

tempted to worship every thing English although unfortunately most of us have not the courage to declare or demonstrate openly our preference. In our heart of hearts we are perfectly aware how backward we are in every respect leaving aside the question of developments of the sciences and the industries. We are keenly conscious even of the limitations of our native languages which will take centuries either to attain any international status or to acquire that perfection which is absolutely necessary for the development of education and culture in our country. I personally believe that the real progress of a nation depends upon how far its common language has been able to come in touch with the current languages of other nations and to what extent it has been able to imbibe and incorporate the ideas, thoughts and feelings of other races in the world. I am sure, the English people and the Americans are regarded as the greatest nations of the world chiefly because of their language which has developed the richest vocabulary and which can reflect correctly the human mind as well as the external world in all their minutest details. I am

sure, if India does not cultivate the English language far more vigorously now than before, she will be pushed back by centuries into her dark ages as she had been once pushed back owing to the absence of a highly developed common language of her own after the Upanishadic period. I am afraid, with the disappearance of the English language from our country in near future, another epoch of darkness will set in from which there may be no prospect of recovery in spite of centuries of political independence.

It was on the 30th of January, 1948, I went out from my house at Darya Ganj at five o'clock in the evening on my usual visit to Connaught Circus. I was sitting with a friend of mine in the office of a printing press at Connaught Circus. We were having a talk about some publication schemes. Ever since I left Lahore, my pen had been lying idle. Many of my old publishers in the Punjab who had shifted to Delhi were also ruined like myself. Otherwise every one of them would have kept my pen busy throughout the year and there would have been no need on my part to look for a job in any college or office. But I had my other

fears also regarding the future of English publications in our country. But then, how long could I afford to sit idle without holding any job or writing any book? Naturally that evening, I had a very long talk with the owner of a printing press at Connaught Circus in order to finalise my scheme of starting some English magazine and also to bring out a few English books of general interest. While we were discussing the scheme, there came a ring on the telephone. My friend atonce attended the call. The ring came from some newspaper office. My friend cried out putting down the receiver, 'Mahatma Gandhi has been shot dead.'

The News came like a bolt from the blue. I put volleys of questions to my friend who received the message on the telephone, 'But who has shot him? It's impossible. Where has he been shot? Who was speaking to you on the phone? Can you really believe it? What a black-letter day!' My friend said in reply, 'Some friend of mine was speaking from the A. P. I. office. Gandhiji has been shot at the Birla Mandir. It's a terrible news indeed.' After a few moments when I had recovered from the shock I said, 'It's

impossible for anybody to believe this news. Can there be any enemy of Gandhiji on earth? The man who never raised his finger even against a fly, how could any body on earth touch such a soul with violence? It's impossible.'

Within half an hour the terrible news spread like a wild fire throughout the city as it spread throughout India and all over the world. People were running from every corner of the city to Birla Mandir. All the shops in Connaught Circus were closed in a few moments and every road and street was completely deserted. There was a deadly gloom reigning everywhere and a horrid silence hanging in the air. The whole atmosphere was thickly charged with anxiety, suspense, doubt, fear, sorrow and pain. My friend also closed atonce his printing press and ran to the Birla Mandir. I moved on slowly from Connaught Circus wherever my legs carried me. On the way, I found one or two straggling pedestrians like myself but none talked to anybody. I was thinking within myself all the while, 'Who has done this great act of madness? Why has he done it? Gandhiji did no injury to any



body. He was a friend to all. He was a friend even to his enemy. But he had no enemy. The English people regarded him as their friend. The Muslims found him to be their greatest brother. Who then could do this act of folly? Was it some lunatic?

As I was walking along Mata Sundari Road, it became fairly dark. The houses on both sides of the road were lighted up. I again began to think within myself, 'Who could commit this act of madness? Any Muslim? No. Gandhiji gave away a portion of his motherland to the Muslims. What quarrel could they have now with him? Could it be a refugee? Some people were actually talking about some Frontier refugee. But why should the refugees raise any finger against him? What injury had he done to them? They have certainly suffered most grievously but was he responsible for their sufferings? How could he prevent their sufferings? And even if they had suffered due to partition, how could he be responsible for it? Gandhiji was not a party to the partition. If he were so, all others also were a party. Nobody else has been touched. And then, how could such an incident occur

in the Birla Mandir? People come there to pray and listen to the prayers of Gandhiji. How could one commit a murder in a place of worship? How heinous must be the hand that planned and committed such a crime in such a sacred place!'

I thought and thought and argued within myself but found no end of it. I was reminded suddenly of the vision which came to me three days ago when I was coming from Dr. Mookerjee's place on Barakhamba Road. I mused within myself, 'What a prophetic vision it was! I could not follow at that time what the vision really signified but now the whole thing was crystal clear. But why should the vision have come to me, of all other millions of souls in India? I had never met Gandhiji in my life. He never knew me. I might have written a few books on him. But I was never a believer in his creed. I never took part in any of the political activities of my country. As a matter of fact, I never believed in politics because I hated it as the dirtiest game in the world. It was for politics alone that I had no regards for Gandhiji. Many a time in my life I wished that Gandhiji had never taken part in poli-

ties, because politics degrades a man from a god to a devil. Such a spiritual power, such a moral force, such a great well-wisher of mankind, such a worshipper of the noblest ideals of life, such a man of courage, character, truth, love and self-sacrifice—how could such a man take part in politics?’

I was so much absorbed in my thinking of Gandhiji that I was not at all aware which way I was following. How many miles I walked, I do not remember. What time it was in the evening I totally forgot. Whither I was going that also never came to my mind. I walked and walked until I came near the Wellington Hospital. What happened to my eyes, I could not understand. But I saw distinctly one shadow walking alongside me on the opposite footpath. There was not much of light on the other foot-path, and hence, the shadow was not distinctly visible, and yet a thrill and a tremour passed through my whole body. I hastened my steps and crossed the road to the other foot-path. I was almost near the shadow. I could only see the back of the person whose shadow I was following. When I came very near him, he turned his face to me. It was Gandhiji in flesh and blood! I lost

my power of speech. My legs also seemed to be stuck up on the pavement. Gandhiji stared at me through his glasses. He was also speechless. But there was a strange look of sadness in his face. How many seconds or minutes passed, I do not know. Gandhiji and myself stood face to face without a syllable on our lips. I gazed and gazed and felt as if I was not in this world. I did not even remember that a few moments ago Gandhiji had been shot dead at the Birla Mandir. My lips trembled and struggled hard to say something but I became completely dumb. The shadow also stood perfectly still and spoke nothing. There was nobody on the road. There was silence, darkness and chequered light, and nothing else. I felt my body growing solid as a stone. I wanted to make a move and get nearer the shadow. I strove with all my nerves to speak. I tried to stretch my arms. For how long I remained in such a condition, I cannot tell. But I distinctly remember that my whole body was tortured with the struggle to speak and to make a move. Just as when a string drawn to its utmost stretch suddenly snaps with its two broken ends flung apart, so also my whole body, stretched

from one end to the other with the desire to speak and to move, suddenly bounded forward with a cry, 'Is it you, Gandhiji?' The shadow melted in the dark at once leaving behind it only the echo of my voice ringing in the dark and lonely air!

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## CHAPTER VI

### Was It a Television?

For one week at least after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, the whole city of Delhi wore the gloomiest look of mourning. I know, the whole of India was in deep mourning not for one week only but for several days. But I talk of Delhi only because I have seen with my own eyes how the streets and the roads, the shops and the offices, the schools and the colleges, the private dwellings and the government buildings, and even the parks and the gardens with their trees, flowers, leaves, and grass were weeping. For at least one or two days, no man was stirring in the streets, no shop was open in any corner of the city. Even the bazars and the markets appeared to be quiet like a graveyard.

On the 31st of January, we all fasted for the whole day as a mark of mourning for the father of our nation who was no more with us. The funeral procession which proceeded from the Birla Mandir extended for miles

right up to Raj Ghat where Gandhiji's body was cremated. It was not merely the citizens of Delhi but of many other parts of our country—Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Parsis, Anglo-Indians and Europeans—all joined the procession. All highest officials of the Civil and the Military branches of the Government followed the procession. When the procession was moving, the Royal Indian Air Force planes showered flowers and dived and ducked in formation giving the parting salute to the departed soul of our great father. I noticed particularly Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel in the procession. They wore such a sad and helpless look as if they had been literally made orphans by Gandhiji. Lakhs of men, women, and children were standing on the roadside with the same dejected faces. Never in my life I have seen such a national mourning in which the hearts of the people so bitterly wept. I realised that day for the first time how Gandhiji was the real father of our nation. All parties, all communities, all sects, all races forgot totally their political and religious differences and paid sincerest homage to their common father. No man

in the history of India probably has left such a deep mark in the hearts of his people.

For the whole of that day we were listening to the '*Ramdhun*' on the radio. Personally, I have never believed in Rama or Sita or Lord Krishna except as mythical personalities in the great epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharat*. But the song of '*Ramdhun*' which used to be sung in the Birla Mandir during the prayers of Gandhiji had a magic about it, and it exercised such a great spell on me that I was sitting near the radio in my house for the whole day and the night. I am by nature fond of society, and even during mourning occasions, I cannot maintain sad and melancholy looks for a long time. But I do not know how on the 31st of January I became perfectly dumb, avoided all company, and locked myself up in a room with the radio till late in the night. I was thinking all the while about Gandhiji after having attended the funeral procession. I could not take any food that day. My mind was constantly haunted by the memory of Gandhiji though never in my life before I thought of him. Of course, it



is my nature to brood over human life, its nothingness, and the mysteries of the universe whenever any person known to me happens to die. I have studied philosophy, I have seen life, but I have not been able to understand why the human mind is very much disturbed whenever it goes to think of death. I am not afraid of death nor have I any very great hankering for life but I do not understand what is life, what is death, what is the human soul, what is this feeling of the human heart which weeps whenever any of its near and dear ones or even any of its fellow-beings dies. When any great man happens to die, I often enquire why so many people mourn his death. And I always put a question to myself what is greatness? If all men are equal in the eyes of God, why should we distinguish between the great and the small? Does God really make certain persons great and certain others small? If that be so, we can not have any respect for God's partiality. What I think to be true is that greatness and pettiness are all man's creation. When we lack in some quality and when we find it in a large measure in others, we at once begin to

adore and worship the possessors of that quality. Sometimes jealousy and envy also make us admire certain qualities in others which we ourselves do not possess, while at other times, it is out of sheer ignorance and fear that we adore those qualities. And sometimes out of a spirit of extreme selfishness we applaud and pay our homage to certain great persons who are helpful to the advancement of our cause and fulfilment of our ambitions.

Whatever may be the reasons, Gandhiji by his death and not by his life made the deepest mark in my heart. I have repeatedly declared that I had never been his follower in thought or in deed. I was never ambitious of getting the leadership of my country in any field, not because I am the unfittest man in my country to hold any responsible position as others are holding now, but because I treated Gandhiji in the same manner as I treat all mankind. Even Jesus Christ, Buddha and Mohammad are in my eyes nothing but men and not messiahs or prophets or gods as they are being worshipped all over the world.

That evening while I was sitting all alone

in my room with the radio singing the 'Ramdhun', to be very frank, I was not in this world, as whenever I look at the sky, at the ocean, at the mountains, at the eyeless deserts or pathless forests or even at the tiniest flowers or birds or animals in the wilderness, I am not in myself but completely lost in endless questionings which have found no answer from any human mind. Such was the exact state of my mind when I was listening to the radio. The scientists of today take pride in having invented the radio, in having imprinted permanently the human voice on the gramophone record or the photo-play film. They also take pride that they can now reflect not only the human voice but also the human image on the radio. But they are not probably aware that what they call the human voice or the human image is a permanent shadow of the universe. They can not probably imagine that not a sound issuing from any living or non-living creature dies or disappears from this universe. It must be beyond their dream to conceive that all the sounds of the birds and the beasts, all the songs and cries of human souls which once

appeared to the human ear thousands of years ago are still lingering in the universe and can be recovered in the very same form if certain instruments can be invented. They cannot probably believe that the sound is the same whether it passes through the leaves of a tree or through the cave of a mountain or through the wind pipe of an insect or a bird or an animal or even through the throat of a human being. They should know that every sound is not only the same but every sound is equally permanent and eternal, and every sound can be recovered either with an instrument or by the human soul. What the scientists call radio-activity, I would like to call psycho-activity—both of which are one and the same process of activity which can produce, and reproduce all kinds of sounds in the universe. In the same way, all images are the same and equally permanent but not as individual images because individual sounds and images are but the manifestations of one universal light which we find in the common fire, in electricity, in the lightning flashes, in the sun and the endless stars. I can not predict if man shall ever be able to

invent a machine by which he will be able to reproduce or recover the various sounds which once appeared on earth ages ago even before the dawn of the human race. It is absolutely a wrong belief that there were no human beings before the birds and the animals or before the reptiles, the insects and the flies or even before the trees, the flowers and the leaves. Everything was there in the universe, and every thing is there, and every thing shall be also there for ever. What others consider as birth and death I consider as no change. If I could be transported by any means to some distant star whose light will take fifty years to reach our planet, I could see myself and also show to the world that I have just been born and am only a few months old because I am at present running my fifty first year. When I shall die, the world will take it that I have completely disappeared from this world or at most have mingled with the five elements of nature. But that is entirely a wrong notion. No body dies. No body lives. We simply appear to live and die.

I was thinking of all such problems

while I was listening to the radio in my room. I found that suddenly the *Ramdhun* stopped. My eyes were naturally turned to the radio. On the dial I found that there was no trace of the names of the stations or the figures of the wave lengths or of anything else. A clear image of Gandhiji appeared in it in his old characteristic pose. The image smiled and mysteriously it spoke. The words are still ringing in my ears. The image spoke, 'Why had you been thinking of me ? I am always with you. You are not separate from me. The world is thinking that somebody else killed me. But I killed myself, because I had done my work for which I appeared on earth'. As the voice stopped, there was complete darkness in the room. The light failed for a moment, but again suddenly it flashed in the bulb on the wall, and the '*Ramdhun*' song returned to the radio ! I did not speak to anybody in the house about this incident lest all should think that I had gone mad with the sorrow of Gandhiji.

## CHAPTER VII

### The end of job-hunting

I returned from Delhi in the month of March after having moved heaven and earth for a job. My family was also shifted from Patna to Lucknow. My eldest daughter was already at Lucknow with one of my uncles-in-law. Another daughter was staying with one of my cousin sisters who was the Principal of a girls' college at Lucknow. My wife and rest of the children were putting up with my youngest brother-in-law at Lucknow. But I was only a temporary visitor to Lucknow waiting for the offer of a job which might come from any corner of India, because I had applied to many places for an educational or any other kind of job.

But jobs do not come easily and particularly when one needs it badly. I had registered my claims in the Employment Exchanges at various centres. Many unemployed persons might have been provided with good or bad jobs through the Employment Exchanges but I was not one of those fortunate souls. I wasted a lot of money and energy in holding correspondence with the Employ-

ment Exchanges. No job came to me through them or through any of my big patrons. So, days dragged on most miserably although myself and my family were comfortably sheltered by my brother-in-law. But the very idea that we were all dependent on the charity of our relatives was most painful to us. It was most unfortunate that even my pen was sitting idle. I was a newcomer to U. P., and hence, I could not possibly get any contact with any of the local publishers. Besides, there was a great slump in the book market after the War. But one of the leading publishers at Lucknow used to know me a little, while I was at Lahore. He gave me some work. I wrote two or three books for him investing all my time in the work. But it took several months to get them printed and a much longer time to realise any money from him. That money came to me when I no longer needed it. That is the way of all Indian publishers.

When April came I became frantic for a job. India Government had disqualified me probably because of my age. The Provincial Government also disqualified me not



only because of my age but also because I was not a domicile in the province. When I thought of all these ostensible reasons for my disqualification in every field, I said to myself, 'What will happen to my family? How long can I afford to hang on the charity of my relatives? Eight months have passed and yet I have not yet been able to secure any job. But I shall never pray to God for a job even if my family comes to the brink of starvation because while leaving Lahore I took an oath that if God could land my family safely in any part of India, I would never beg any further boon from Him. I honoured that oath even till today. But the little money that I had was completely spent up on the railway expenses due to the shifting of my wife and children to various places. And whatever little money I had in the custody of the Government at Lahore before the partition could not be transferred to India, nor could any portion of it, whichever had been transferred, was operable by me for withdrawal. Therefore, with all my assets in Postal Savings Bank, I was completely penniless.

I was wondering all the while what I should do. The summer vacation of the

colleges in U. P. was drawing near, and if there were vacancies in the colleges for any teaching or administrative job, I could apply, but then, there was no guarantee that I would get the chance of an appointment, partly because I was a newcomer to U. P. and partly because, in private colleges, the appointing authorities care more for personal recommendations than for any academic or other qualifications. So, I completely despaired of my future in spite of my high academic qualifications and long years of teaching and administrative experience.

But when one stands on his last legs and is driven to the walls, one loses all courage, hope and faith. That is exactly what happened to me. In fits of desperation I sometimes thought of working as an insurance agent because the job requires only labour and no capital. But then, in spite of my impressive personality, persuasive tongue, and wide acquaintance, I hated to be an insurance agent, because I have seen how the insurance agents have got to beg from door to door, how they are insulted and humiliated wherever they go to secure busi-

ness, and how people avoid their company as everybody avoids a bore. My sense of dignity and self-respect would not permit me to stoop so low, and therefore, I had to give up the idea.

But what should I do ? How could I earn money ? My family was fairly big. Nothing less than three hundred rupees per month would do even for their bare existence. I would not be able to earn even one hundred rupees if I stooped to be a clerk in any office. But even a clerical job required some qualifications which I did not possess. I knew nothing of stenography or accountancy. Then again, when I thought of the miserable life of the clerks, when I considered how they were looked down upon by all people, how they were overworked, and how they were often personally insulted and humiliated by their bosses in the various concerns, I felt as if I should better starve than accept the job of a clerk.

What other job then remained for me ? Should I try for some editorial job in some newspaper ? But then, I was not a trained journalist. Besides, most of the newspapers in India are financially not very well off

because in our country people are neither book-minded nor newspaper-minded. So, I was in a terrible fix. I thought within myself how hopeless is the position of a teacher or an educationist when he is without his own job. He is fit for no other work, and in a way, he is fit for nothing. I cursed my high education, my penmanship, and all my literary gifts whichever I possessed. India is a country, I thought, where only the ploughman, the blacksmith, the carpenter, the weaver, the clerk and the professional beggar can exist. I wonder sometimes how a man like Gandhiji could recommend for such a country, which has been already reduced to the lowest standard of living, a further reduction in the standard of living by taking to the *charaka* and the plough and by putting on the loin cloth and living in huts in the villages. With all regards to Gandhiji I must say to my countrymen that unless and until they follow America and Europe at least in the development of their industries and in raising their standard of living, I am afraid, in spite of all their pride in their religion, philosophy, spiritualism and culture, they

will for ever be regarded by the progressive world as mere pre-historic barbarians.

*The Lady of Dilkhusa garden—*

But then, I came to such a pass that I could not afford to choose between jobs. I must have any job whatever comes to my hand. One day, I felt so desperate that I could not stay at home. At about five o'clock in the afternoon I went out to see some people who were my friends and who were connected with some business concerns. I could not meet them all in their bungalows. But some of them with whom I had a long talk about various jobs in their various concerns did not encourage me at all in taking up any job in a commercial or industrial concern because they said that I would have a greater discouragement by proving a misfit in those concerns. They bluntly said, "Teachers and penmen can fit nowhere except in the class-room or the library." I could not deny it, but by acknowledgment, I could not solve my bread problem.

When I was returning from my friends it was probably nine o'clock in the evening. In spite of my long stay at Lucknow I did not know very correctly even some of the

main roads in the civil lines, and particularly in the night, every road or street appeared to be like any other because of the similarity of the bungalows and also of the roads and the streets. The lamp posts standing at regular intervals on both sides of the road added to my confusion in the chequered light. I really lost my way that evening. I walked and walked probably round Dilkhusa garden several times, and when I could not trace out my way, I got into the garden. At that hour of the evening there were very few pedestrians even on any of those lonely roads, and naturally, I did not expect any human soul in Dilkhusa garden, though in the summer evenings many respectable families in their car visit the garden and often stay there till ten o'clock to breathe fresh air in privacy.

I was dog-tired when I got into the garden. But I had no intention to linger there even for a moment because I feared that with the advance of the evening I might lose my touch with the last pedestrians who could possibly help me out of the labyrinths of roads and streets and put me on some known road. My real intention was to

discover anybody in the garden and ask him to help me. I walked through the pathways inside the garden for at least ten minutes but no human soul was visible anywhere. I expected to meet some batch of university students who, having got tired of visiting the picture-houses and strolling through Hazratganj every evening, sometimes infest Dilkusha garden for mere adventure and romance. These university boys not only of Lucknow but of all other university towns find all their delight in the wild goose chase, I mean, in the vanishing *sarees*, skirts, and *garrhraras*. Their only ambition in life is to catch the tail of a glance, the twinkle of a smile; the accent of a lisp, on the road-side or in a garden, and then, to talk and discuss and weave at leisure all sorts of romance and enchantment in the circle of their friends. But that evening, unfortunately, there was no such adventurer in the garden. My heart became more and more depressed when I greeted nothing but perfect solitude and silence in that historical park. But because I had been thinking constantly of my unemployment, I was comparatively unconscious of my

surroundings. How many minutes passed away since I got into the garden, I cannot tell. But I caught a glimpse of a human shadow at some distance. It looked like the shadow of a young woman. When it advanced nearer I could distinctly see that the young woman was a respectable lady with her hair bobbed upto the shoulders and putting on a milk-white saree of pure *khaddar*. From her manner of dress she appeared to be a widow but a paragon of beauty. I wondered what a young lady could do in the garden at such an hour and when she had nobody else with her. I got a little curious about her but I never thought of questioning her or even drawing nearer to her in spite of my silver hair. I found, she was moving towards me. I tried to avoid a direct encounter inspite of all my curiosity. But I could not avoid her. She came straight face to face before me, and to my greatest amazement, said most politely, 'Can I give you a lift in my car? You seem to be very much tired and distracted.' I could not have a look at my face but I knew that she had correctly studied me. I did not know what to say in reply but I felt



this much that if I missed that chance of getting out of the garden and all the labyrinths of roads and streets, I might have to spend the whole night in the garden or wander about following the will-o-the-wisp. So, I said, most gratefully, 'Thank you very much'.

Within a few seconds we got out of the garden. I followed her as if held by an enchantment, and she too never looked back to see if I followed her or not. A small Hillman car was parking outside the garden. When we neared it, she turned her eyes on me and said, 'Please step in.' Automatically I was in the car, and, in a moment, the car flitted through the roads. I was sitting by her side. I did not know where she was driving me. Every road seemed to be absolutely new, to me. She steered right and left near the bends of the roads. Not a word she spoke to me, nor did I have the courage to speak a syllable to her. I have moved in many fair circles, and I have never blushed in their company. But I do not know who sealed my lips when she was driving me along, God knows where.

Within about half an hour, the car glided into the compound of an ancient building.

It pulled up under a big portico. The lady simply waved her hand towards the stairs. I stepped out of the car like a man in a dream and followed my fair guide. She took me through many verandahs and corridors into a big hall which was absolutely empty but for a few oriental sofas and cushions, all dressed in pure *khaddar*. On the walls I noticed the portraits of many of the political leaders of our country. But on the dias on which the sofas were lying, there was a life-size oil painting of Mahatma Gandhi put up on an easel. There was a cheval mirror exactly of the same size of the painting. The lady sat on one of the sofas facing the portrait of Gandhiji and keeping her back to the mirror.

It was she who spoke first, 'Why do you worry ? You will get a job soon. God has conveyed you and your family from Lahore not to starve.' As she spoke those words I felt distinctly that the voice was familiar to me, that the very form of the speaker I had seen before but where and when I could not recollect. But when I heard those words of assurance from her lips, I forgot altogether who was speaking or why she

was speaking or how she could speak so. It never struck me at that moment that she was a perfect stranger to me. I altogether forgot that she had met me in Dilkhusha garden only half an hour ago. The hope of a job was such a great thing to me at that time that my mind was completely lost in the dream of it. A person who has starved for days can best realise how consoling is the very thought of food. So also I was completely maddened with the prospect of a job in near future. I never considered who was the person and on what authority she could hold out a guarantee for such a prospect.

The young lady again spoke, 'The world is wrongly thinking that Gandhi is responsible for all the misfortunes which millions of the human souls in our country have suffered or are suffering still. Gandhi never wanted to divide his motherland. When some of his brothers wanted to separate from him he painfully agreed to part with his brothers. He loved the Hindus. He loved the Muslims. All were his brothers. But if brothers want to quarrel with brothers they should better part to enjoy peace. By parting one must surely

feel some pain, and that is why, both the Hindus and the Muslims have suffered so much. Suffering is good for the purification of the soul. Therefore, we should not complain of our sufferings. Who has not suffered in the world to gain a great thing? The mother suffers the greatest pain of labour for the birth of a child, and when the child is born, she forgets all her pains. Even a plant suffers when it sprouts up from a seed. The branches of a tree also feel considerable pain when the leaves come out on them. Even the buds of flowers sicken for a time to blossom into a glorious flower. The stars in the heavens probably suffer the greatest pain when they give birth to planets. This mighty universe was also born out of ages of pain.' Just while the lady was speaking, I felt in my ears the distinct harmony of the same old '*Ramdhun*' song which seemed to rise from every corner of the hall in which we were sitting. It sounded like the chanting of the Vedic hymns which the ancient Rishis of India used to sing. I felt distinctly that every syllable of the song found its tongue in the floor, in the walls, in the roof of the ancient

majestic building. It thrilled every pore of my body and soul. Like the breaths of the wind, like the waves of the sea, like the sweet fragrance of flowers, the words of the lady and the song blended in harmony. The whole universe seemed to echo that immortal sound and the music through the sun and the moon and the stars. I looked about me in ecstasy. I stared at the lady. I stared at the portrait of Gandhiji. I looked at the walls. I looked at the roof. I looked on the floor. To my great amazement I found all around me nothing but the image of Gandhiji. How long I remained in that dream of enchantment, I do not know, but when I woke up from my dream, I found myself not in the ancient building, not in Dilkhusha garden, but somewhere near the Government House. How I came there I wondered. I was still on my legs walking and walking. My limbs were completely exhausted. I could hardly move any further step. My body seemed to sink. Just then a rickshaw was passing. I hailed it and like a drunkard reeling, I stepped into it. When I reached home, all stared at me. My wife said, 'What has happened to you?'

## CHAPTER VIII.

### Two Calendars.

I am not a lover of calendars though collecting calendars is a hobby with the young, because now-a-days most of the Indian calendars print the photos of the film stars. It is also a mania with some of the elderly orthodox men and women who worship the Hindu saints and gods and goddesses because some of the Indian calendars print the portraits of such divine souls as Lord Krishna, his wife Radhika, Rama and Sita, Lord Buddha, and even Hanumanji. The Hindus have the tendency to idolise all their great men, and that is why, the portraits of Gandhiji, Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel, Subhas Bose, and other heroes of our country are printed in many of the calendars.

I never preserve calendars except for the purpose of knowing the days and the months of the year, and for this purpose too, I generally preserve the calendars in which there are either beautiful landscape

paintings or lovely sketches of the Oriental art which, of course, are mostly portraits of pretty women in various poses as inspired by the varied feelings and emotions of the human heart.

I have several such calendars in my bedroom at Jaunpur where I have been working in a degree college for the last three years ever since the lady of the Dilkhusa garden in Lucknow predicted or assured me of a job. But besides these, I have also got two calendars in which are printed the portrait of Gandhiji. One of the calendars has a bust portrait while the other has a full-length portrait of the Mahatma. Ordinarily, I never stare at these two calendars because there is nothing attractive about the portrait of Gandhiji. But whenever I happen to look at any of them, I am reminded at once of the greatest man of our country who is no more with us now but who is still worshipped by millions of souls in their heart of hearts, not only as the father of our nation, but also as an incarnation of God just as Lord Krishna or Ram is worshipped. I am reminded also of the strange visions and incidents about Gandhiji some

of which I have related already. But after looking at the portraits for some time I begin to think that a portrait is a portrait and a calendar is a calendar, and therefore, they are nothing but shadows of colour painted on mere paper.

One night while I was sleeping in my bed-room, I was once or twice disturbed in my sleep but I did not wake up. I felt that there was something in my room—some presence of a person. My eyes were so heavy with sleep that in spite of the disturbance I did not like to open them. I was not even aware whether there was light or darkness in my room. Most of the nights I go to bed a little late because I work on the typewriter to write my books at least upto twelve o'clock, and sometimes upto two o'clock. That night I probably went to bed at about one o'clock. Like Napoleon, whenever I lie in bed, I at once fall asleep. In spite of my long years of vigil in the night I have not caught the least infection of insomnia nor have I the tendency to sleep in the day-time unless of course I am ill or extremely tired.

When I go to bed I never switch off the light. Most people can not go to sleep with



the light on but I can not have a wink of sleep without a brilliant light. For this reason, I always use a very high candle-power lamp in my bed-room, and because I always sleep alone in a separate bed-room, I have got the privilege of keeping on the light throughout the night.

That night when my sleep was twice disturbed I had a feeling in my sleep, that there was no light in my bed-room. For this consciousness of the absence of light, I instinctively opened my eyes and looked about while lying in the bed. The lamp was really not burning and yet I felt, there was some light in the room. This queer feeling completely dissolved my sleep but I was still lying in my bed. A mosquito net was hanging over me, and through the net I could distinctly feel that somebody was sitting on my bed nearby. I was very much startled particularly because the body was surrounded by a halo which scattered its rays like a phosphorescent light. I rubbed my eyes several times in order to make sure that I was not sleeping or dreaming. At first I dared not put any question to the body. I never believed in any supernatural

being in my life, and therefore, it never struck me at that moment that the body which was sitting by my side was not a human being. For a moment a strange fear crept into my heart, and at once, all the hairs of my body stood on end. Just then the figure spoke for the first time, 'Don't be afraid of me.' I wanted to ask him who he was but my tongue was completely paralysed for a few moments. As if knowing my heart, the figure burnt more brilliantly and spoke out, 'Look! Here I am. You know me.' My eyes opened wide. My body and soul thrilled. I went on staring until at last my lips burst into a few syllables, 'What ! Gandhiji?'

There was no mistake about it if one could believe his eyes and ears. All my senses were so much stupefied with wonder, curiosity and also fear that I dared not extend my arms to touch the body of Gandhiji and see if it was a mere shadow or a solid thing. I dared not even get up from my bed. I lay down like a patient in paralysis and simply stared and listened and sometimes muttered a few syllables. In a fit of excitement I put several questions all at once to

that apparition or human form, "How could you come here when you are long dead ? Are you a spirit of Gandhiji or what are you ? Wherefrom are you now coming ? Why do you appear before me over and over again ? Tell me really who you are and why you come to me." The shadow or the figure replied, "Who says, I am dead ? Nothing in the universe can die. Everything lives. Nobody is born, and nobody dies. It is we who think like that. I am not coming from any place. I am always here and now. There is no you or I. It is all I. I am I. You are I. I am not appearing or disappearing. I always am. I have not come to you but I have come to myself. It is my wish to be or not to be." I at once said, "I do not understand you. Are you not Gandhiji ?" The shadow said, "I am nobody but I am everybody." I again asked, "What are you ? What am I ?" The voice replied, "I am He. You are He." I felt completely puzzled. Like a suffocated man I struggled to breathe freely, I tried to kick my limbs in the bed, I made an attempt to get up. But something seemed to hold my body and press it hard against the bed in such a manner that

I felt as if I was one with the bed, one with everything solid, one with the universe round me. I could do nothing except think and feel that I was completely helpless. It was a painful torture which I suffered in trying to be free although at the same time I felt that I was perfectly free. Most helplessly I cried to the shadow, "Please help me out of this darkness. I do not understand anything." The shadow said, "There is no darkness or light. There is nothing to understand. The moment you make a distinction between you and me, between light and darkness, you begin to lose sight of yourself and you say that you do not understand anything."

I again wanted to argue with him but my tongue this time became perfectly locked up and my eyes too were motionless in their sockets. There was a feeling of nothingness, of total stillness, of complete loneliness. The whole universe seemed one—myself, the shadow and everything else. I do not know what happened to me. How long I was in that condition, I do not know, but when I was myself again, I heard the knock of my servant on the door of my room. I got up suddenly from my bed and opened the door. It was eight o'clock in the morning.

## CHAPTER IX

### Disturbances in East Bengal

It was in the months of January, February and March, 1950, great communal disturbances again broke out in some of the district towns, and villages of East Bengal. Why after the partition of India there should be any further communal disturbances in Pakistan or India, nobody knows. But people say that the policy of the Pakistan Government is to make Pakistan absolutely a theocratic State. They want that every citizen of their Dominion should profess Islam and should be united with other citizens into one nation in religion, in thought and deed. People say further that the Hindus in Pakistan, who are not prepared to submit to this kind of unification forgetting their own religion, language and culture, must leave Pakistan, and therefore, thousands of the East Bengal Hindus migrated to West Bengal. It is said also that East Bengal being the most thickly populated area in the whole sub-continent of India,

the policy of the Pakistan Government is to eliminate as much of the non-Muslim elements as possible in order to accommodate more comfortably their own elements. But the problem is, who would like to leave his homestead, his native soil, his worldly assets and venture into a land where there is a more acute problem of the struggle for existence, however congenial its atmosphere may otherwise be? Hence, the Hindus of East Bengal migrated to West Bengal only under extreme pressure—the pressure of conversion to Islam, the pressure of outrage on the modesty of women, and also the pressure of loot and arson—all of which became rampant in most of the district towns and villages of East Bengal during the months of January, February and March of 1950. During those three months such a reign of horror and terror was created in East Pakistan that thousands of the Hindus began to pour into West Bengal. Just as during the transfer of power in the month of August, 1947, a wholesale massacre of both the communities was committed by the West and the East Punjab and the North West Frontier

Province, so also in the months of January, February and March, 1950, a massacre of human life and property in a mass scale was committed in all parts of East Bengal and in some parts of West Bengal. When the Hindus of East Bengal began to pour into West Bengal, the Muslims of West Bengal also followed the example and began to pour into East Bengal. The Prime Minister of Pakistan was alarmed at the huge exodus of the Muslims from West Bengal to East Bengal because he knew that every inch of East Bengal was already overcrowded, and there was no room for further congestion by the Muslim element. He also knew that the Muslims in India could live more comfortably and peacefully in West Bengal than in East Bengal because India is genuinely a secular State and the Hindus are thousand times far more tolerant than the Muslims. So, he at once made a very diplomatic pact with Pandit Nehru so that there might not be any further exodus of the Muslims from West Bengal to East Bengal.

During the East Bengal disturbances of January, February and March, 1950, for some days, all communications by railways

and steam-ships, and even by telegraph and telephone were completely stopped as it was done during the month of August, 1947 between West Punjab and East Punjab. My parents had been staying all through at Dacca before and after the partition. But the city of Dacca was not so much affected by the disturbances as the other district towns of East Bengal. But then, my parents being extremely old and putting up all alone in their big house at Wari, I got very much alarmed and extremely anxious for them when I could not get any message from them. I sent many express letters and telegrams from Jaunpur to Dacca but without any reply. I became mad with anxiety. I had already lost my all in west Pakistan, and I naturally feared that I was going to lose my parents in East Pakistan. But what could I do ? I could not possibly run to Dacca to save my parents. It would be madness indeed when people were flying away from East Bengal in terror and agony. All that I could do was to keep waiting indefinitely for a message from my parents. Of course, I knew that my parents were putting up in a very respectable locality, and unless the



whole city of Dacca was affected by the disturbances, they would be safe. But then, I knew of many cases at Lahore as well as at Dacca in which the Muslim refugees forcibly occupied certain houses by literally butchering the inmates, and my parents being extremely old and completely defenceless were very likely to be similarly butchered if the disturbances went out of control at Dacca.

I passed about three weeks at least in terrible anxiety. I could not do any college work during those days, nor could I have even a wink of sleep in any of those nights. One evening at about nine o'clock, I was returning on foot to my college quarters from the Grand Hotel after taking my dinner as usual. I was thinking all the way about my parents. The road from Olanganj to my college is extremely lonely and comparatively darker than the road in the city. The electric lamp posts stand on only one side of the road and at intervals of at least two hundred yards. Very few vehicles or pedestrians pass through that road after eight o'clock in the evening. The loneliness as well as the darkness of the place made

me more absorbed in the thought of my parents. I was thinking within myself what would happen to my poor parents if some of the Muslim refugees forced their way into their house and laid violent hands on them ? Poor souls, they could not possibly raise a single finger in self-defence. My father is ninety years old while my mother is eighty years old. My mother is practically blind. She has been crippled with rheumatism. Nobody would come to their help if they were in trouble. I had not met my parents for about ten years before the partition of India because when I was at Lahore I could not visit Bengal for a long time due to my varied activities and engagements. So, if anything unfortunate happened to my parents, it would be really the unkindest cut because I would not be able to meet them again in this world.

I was, therefore, thinking of my parents most anxiously while I was walking on the road. My body and soul seemed to be absorbed in the thought. I was, therefore, not aware of my surroundings—who else was walking on the road or which vehicle was passing by me. When I

had come just near the small bridge or rather the culvert which was overhanging a little stream of water, I caught distinctly in my ears the words, 'Your parents are perfectly safe, and they will soon shift to West Bengal'. I was startled by the voice and the words. I turned back. I found a beggar walking just behind me. He was lean and thin with a stooping gait. He carried a staff in his hand. I closely observed the beggar and found that he was not even mindful of my presence. He walked as absentmindedly as I was walking. There was no other pedestrian on the road within visible distance. I wondered who had uttered those words which I caught in my ears. I could never suspect the beggar to have uttered those words. But then, I could not trace out any other human soul near about. So, I was completely at a loss. I looked about here and there for a few moments and then again began to walk. Just when I came near the Kayastha Pathshala Intermediate college building, where there is a small temple of Hanumanji, I again heard the same voice repeating the same words, 'Your parents are perfectly safe,

and they will soon shift to West Bengal.' I was extremely startled not by the repetition of the voice or the words but by the sudden advance of the beggar who had lagged far behind me a few moments ago but who had gone ahead of me all of a sudden. I intently watched the movement of the beggar. He seemed to have changed his gait, dress, and even the features of his face. My eyes dilated with wonder when the beggar slightly turned his face towards me and I could at once recognise the face in a crowd of millions of faces. It was distinctly the face of Gandhiji ! My body and soul rose to a tension, and I jumped forward with curiosity to get nearer the beggar, but before I could move a step, the face, the figure and everything of the beggar most mysteriously melted in the shadow of the idol of Hanumanji which glistened in the flickering light of the taper that was burning in the niche of the temple at the foot of the idol. I could not have any sleep for the whole night in spite of the mysterious assurance from the air about the safety of my parents. But to my greatest wonder, next day, I received a letter from my father

who wrote to me that they were perfectly safe and were trying to shift to Calcutta soon. Of course, they did not succeed in shifting to West Bengal before the 21st of February, 1951.

### **Rickshaw accident.**

Some people say that Jaunpur is a God-forsaken city probably because the road that runs from the railway station to Olanganj is an eternal problem for the P. W. D. and the District Board engineers who have been making honest attempts for centuries to repair it, but unfortunately, every year with the advent of the monsoons, the road becomes a regular stream of pudding, and neither the pedestrians nor the rickshaws, nor even the more respectable cars can ply through that semi-liquid and semi-solid stream. The only vehicle which jolts and splatters its way is the immortal '*ekka*' for which also Jaunpur is really famous. The beauty of this vehicle is that whoever happens to ride it can digest even the hardest food in a few seconds because of the jerking and jolting movements which help further to disjoint the limbs of the rider, and sometimes if the rider is a novice, he is

very likely to be bodily thrown out into the stream of pudding which is ever ready to embrace him !

My hotel was situated in the city on the other side of the Gumti bridge. But the road from the hotel to my college quarters was a very clean and well-built macadamized road. Hence, even during the heaviest monsoon, the rickshaws and other vehicles could ply quite comfortably. But the problem was that during heavy rains, the rickshaw was no protection because it had practically no hood and absolutely no flap on any side to prevent the rains from drenching the seat. But during drizzling rains, one could save his head and also a portion of his body by squeezing oneself into a corner of the rickshaw.

One evening at about ten o'clock I was returning from my hotel to my college quarters after taking my dinner. It was drizzling, and therefore, I got into a rickshaw. In the very beginning, I gave a warning to the driver that he must go on very slowly and cautiously partly because it was pitch dark and partly because the road was so much congested that any moment anybody

might collide against anything. Some of the *ekkas* and rickshaws of Jaunpur have got the mania of flying at a break-neck speed although there is nothing at stake either to catch a train or to keep an engagement in time. One can conceive of such speed in a city like New York where life moves at a terrific speed and where the delay of even one second means the loss of many dollars. But in a pre-historic and unprogressive city like Jaunpur, where every thing is centuries behind the clock, there is no such question. And it is really surprising why some of the *ekka* and rickshaw drivers fly through the most crowded road like the ancient Greek charioteers howling and shouting and smacking their whip in the air as if going to win a race. It is also surprising that in spite of this mad racing in the day or in the night, there has not been any single accident either to the pedestrians or to the vehicles. But then, I could not depend upon the precedents of such good luck. I considered my life too precious for such a barbarous experiment.

From Olanganj to my college, as I have already mentioned, the road is very lonely;

and also dark, but there is no risk of an accident if one is not absolutely reckless. Yet I sufficiently warned my rickshaw driver to be very careful because of the pitch darkness prevailing that night due to the monsoon clouds in the sky. My driver was a young lad. He was full of vitality and youth which it was difficult for him to control and which unfortunately wanted to find an outlet through his legs on the pedals. For sometime I noticed that he had honoured my warning and took due caution in not accelerating the wheels. I was carrying an electric torch in my pocket which I flared from time to time in order to show him the way so that he might not go too near the side of the road and drive me into the lake of water which collects every year during the monsoons. But he did not need the torch light at all because his instinct prompted him to ply exactly through the mid-road as it prompts the cabman in big cities to steer clear of every thing in the thickest traffic.

For sometime I felt confident that there was no more any risk of an accident because I had practically covered more than half



the distance. During those brief moments I was absolutely unaware that my rickshaw driver had forgotten all my warnings and had been driving his vehicle at a considerable speed. I was not even aware that two *ekkas* also were driving alongside my rickshaw, and both were competing with each other in speed. My rickshaw driver also accelerated his speed in order to take part in the race. Just when I came near the house of the head clerk of our college, there was a sudden crash. One of the rear wheels of my rickshaw went out of its hub. The whole vehicle took a summersault. It was so quick that I could hardly balance myself in the seat even by holding tightly the saddle with one hand and the left side of the seat with the other hand. One of my knees came directly on the road and it was badly bruised as the rickshaw wheeled round, while my head brushed against one of the wheels of the *ekkas* that whizzed by me at a terrific speed. My skull would have been completely smashed to atoms and I would have been stone-dead on the spot. But a miracle happened. I felt distinctly in that brief twinkle of an eye that a certain hand supported my

head and I was saved from instantaneous death. Whose hand was it? I could not see any thing in the dark, and besides, all my senses were so much confused that I could hardly feel anything of the accident that occurred. When my senses dawned a little, I saw that somebody was standing by my side. It was the figure of a half-naked fakir, aged and shrunken in his limbs, and holding a staff in one of his hands. There was one electric lamp post a few yards ahead of us. In that indistinct light I could clearly see the face and the entire body of the person who saved my life at such a crisis. The moment I recognised him, I forgot all about the accident, and wondered if I was dreaming or waking. The rickshaw driver stood at a distance looking guilty of his crime because it was due to his recklessness that the accident occurred. But my eyes were not on him. I stared and stared at the shadow of the fakir who was still standing by my side. I cried out in gratefulness and surprise, 'Gandhiji ! How could you come here? I shall be grateful to you all my life.' The shadow smiled and then distinctly uttered, 'I have not saved you from anything. You

did not have any accident, You were not coming in any rickshaw. There were no *ekkas* here!’ I looked about, and actually, there was no rickshaw, no *ekka* in any visible distance. I put my fingers on my left knee, and to my great wonder, there was no wound or bruise anywhere. I then looked up to stare at the fakir, in order to make sure if everything was a dream. The fakir had melted in the darkness with the rickshaw and the *ekkas*. I walked slowly and meditatively to my quarters in the college buildings.

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## CHAPTER X.

### Neuralgic attack.

I could not shift my family to Jaunpur simply for want of a good house in the college colony, and this is why, I have been staying all alone at Jaunpur for the last three years. For one year I lived with the Principal of my college in his bungalow but ever since he married for the second time and needed more accommodation, I shifted to the college buildings to one of the rooms in the minarets. There are only four minarets on the first floor of the college building. Each minaret contains one octagonal room sufficiently commodious for reading and sleeping purposes. Four professors live in these four minarets like quartermasters. The rooms are very breezy and well-lighted, because the college building is situated in the centre of many beautiful green lawns and gardens. It is an ideal place for education. Our college colony is indeed a beauty spot in the whole city of Jaunpur. Unfortunately there are no professorial quarters,

and therefore, some of the professors who are outsiders like myself and have no local relatives have to live in the college building bearing all the tortures of loneliness and solitude. The college building is so vast and so scattered that even if one shouts from any of the minarets at the top of his voice, nobody is likely to hear his voice from any other of the minarets. During the college hours in the day, the vast building rings with the voices of the students, the teachers, the clerks, the chaprasis and the visitors, but in the night, there is such a supreme silence in every corner and wing of the edifice that it feels like a great musoleum. There are chowkidars who occasionally go round the whole building and shout. Every night I hear their voice echoing in the silence of the midnight and melting in the lonely air of the endless lawns and gardens.

It was in the month of January, 1951, my eldest son happened to stay with me for some days. I brought him from Lucknow with a view to give him a little coaching in certain subjects because he was going to take the competitive examination of the Military Academy for a commission in the

Army. I used to sit up every day late in the night and my son also used to work with me upto twelve or one o'clock. One night I went to bed a little earlier because I was not feeling well. My son was still working. At about twelve o'clock, I felt a very acute pain in my cheek bones. I generally suffer from toothache but this was not toothache. It was a more acute pain than even toothache. I could not follow what kind of pain it was because I never had this kind of pain before in my life. The pain increased rapidly, and in an hour or so, it became intolerable. I was tossing in the bed and was almost crying like a child. My son got frightened. He wanted to run to the doctor and also inform some of the professors who were putting up in the college building. But I asked him not to do so, first because my son did not know any of the doctors at Jaunpur. He did not know even the roads and streets of Jaunpur as he had landed there very recently. Secondly, I knew that doctors of Jaunpur were not available at all hours of the night like other doctors in the big cities. So, even if my son had gone to any of the doctors, it was very likely that he would

have refused to visit me on some excuse or other.

But the pain was so intolerable that I became almost mad with it. I was used to toothache all my life, and therefore, ordinary pain could never make me restless. When I could not bear the pain any longer, I asked my son to boil water on the stove and make me saline gargle. In toothache I have found saline gargle as the best pain-killer. Like others, I never use Aspirin or other tablets because I am afraid, they weaken the heart, although I know, they kill the pain all right. My son boiled tumblers of saline water and every five minutes I was gargling with it. It relieved the pain for a few seconds but again the pain relapsed. So, I had to gargle with the hot salt water for the whole night. I did not have any wink of sleep.

When it struck five o'clock in the morning, my son could not hold his patience any longer. Without my knowledge, he went out to inform some of the professors in the college building and then to call a doctor. The doctor did not come at that early hour in the morning but sent some

tablets for me to swallow at intervals of four hours if the pain persisted. Although the pain did not subside in the least yet I refused to swallow any of those tablets fearing that they must be some of those patent pain-killers which weaken the heart. My son thought that the pain must have subsided a good deal otherwise I would have greedily swallowed the tablets. The professors came to see me. I asked them to serve me tea because sometimes I have seen that hot tea greatly relieves pain. Tea was immediately served to me but it did not relieve my pain in the least. So, I was tossing in the bed all the while as before and waited anxiously for the arrival of the doctor. But the doctor did not come before twelve o'clock at noon when I was fast asleep. How I fell asleep I do not know. My son had gone to the latrine in the meanwhile and the professors also went to attend their classes because in the month of January we used to have morning classes.

Just before I had fallen asleep I remember faintly that somebody had caressed my face with his hand. Whose hand it was I could not see in the beginning, but



when I fell into sleep, I could see distinctly the person whose hand was on my face. It was the hand of Gandhiji! He was sitting by my side and most tenderly moving his fingers all over my cheeks. Most mysteriously at the very touch of his fingers, the pain disappeared completely. Gandhiji did not speak a single word to me, nor did I question him anything. I simply noticed three bullet marks in his chest and abdomen. I also noticed that his glasses were not in his eyes. One of the chappals was not on his feet. I slept probably for six or eight hours. When I got up it was three o'clock in the afternoon. I came to know that the doctor had visited me in the meanwhile but he did not disturb me in my sleep. He thought that it was due to the tablets I had fallen asleep. He prescribed for me a mixture of medicine which was to be taken every four hours.

When I got up from my sleep, the pain had totally disappeared but I felt very weak and my whole body seemed to be completely shattered. I did not like to take the mixture of medicine thinking that it would be of no use to me, although my son repeatedly

insisted on taking it. I did not take any food for the whole day except one or two cups of tea. In the evening I again fell asleep.

### My friend's child.

In the night I had a very queer dream. I saw a child of five or six years—quite a healthy and handsome child, whom I could not recognise. The child began to talk to me. He said that he was born in the Punjab. He could not tell me the name of his parents. He said that he loved his father very much but he did not like his mother because she used to chide him whenever he used to take any banana or sweets. But then, he loved banana and sweets more than anything else in the world. Therefore, he quarrelled with his mother and ran away from her. I asked him from which place he had come to me. He replied that he came from Delhi. I told him that he should go back to his parents. He smiled at my suggestion. I again asked him why he had come to me. He said that I was a friend to his father, and therefore, he wanted me to convey some message to his father about him. I enquired what message I should

convey. He said that his father should always keep some banana and sweets near his photo in the house so that he might go there daily and eat them.

When I got up from my sleep I was wondering all the while what the dream could mean. I felt very anxious about my own youngest child who was practically of that age. I told my eldest son to send a telegram to Lucknow to enquire about his youngest brother. But before the telegram was sent a letter came from my friend, Mr. Narbir Sen, at Delhi, who wrote to me that his child had died recently. Mr. Sen wrote to me that because I was a clairvoyant, I could possibly tell him where his son had gone or how he could recover him. I at once wrote a letter to him saying that I had met his child in a dream when I was lying in bed with neuralgic pain. I wrote to him also something about the talk I had with his child. That very evening, the Manager of our college and a few members of the Managing Committee came to visit me. I related to them the whole story of my strange dream. There was a sadhu also in their company. Head unfortunately take nh

a vow of silence otherwise I would have asked him to interpret my dream. But I know that these dreams cannot be interpreted by any man in the world. Yet Dr. Freud and other psychologists have tried to analyse them. My own interpretation of dreams is that when the human soul falls asleep, all his senses which create the illusion of this universe cease to exist, and thus, it becomes conscious of the universal soul. This consciousness of the universal soul brings to the individual soul the entire picture of its varied experiences which are sometimes lost altogether because of the changes of the body which it assumes during the process of transmigration of the soul. Sometimes it has been seen that certain individuals seem to remember correctly all about their previous birth. The only reason is that such individual souls have still in them some touch with the universal soul which is generally cut off completely from individual consciousness by the senses. I do not know if my interpretation of dreams should appeal to any of the modern psychologists. But I can tell them that dreams are neither empty nothings nor are they irrelevant recollections of the past.

They are as much real as the experiences of wakefulness only with the difference that they can not be indentified with any reference to our pre-natal existence. I must tell the modern psychologists that even the birds and the animals have their dreams just like those of human beings, because their soul and ours are exactly the same. I go to the extent of believing that the plants and the flowers also dream like ourselves, and they have also the same mind as we possess. With the discovery of the atomic energy in matter I am constrained to believe that even the dust particles have as much consciousness as the human souls. All the ancient buildings of the monarchs and the emperors, all the great musoleums, and all the ancient temples, mosques, and churches have in them the sound of the voices which once echoed in those towers, conclaves, galleries, varandahs, corridors, and stair-cases. Many people have certified that they have heard those ancient voices and have seen those ancient human forms which seem to have melted for ever with the dissolution of their bodies. But to me, it appears, none of them is dead but every one of them is alive as

much as we are, and so, whenever they like, they come out of their invisibility and appear before our eyes like unearthly shadows creating a fear in our hearts. I can assure my fellowmen that they have nothing to fear from those shadows because they are as much human as we are, and they can not do us any more injury than we can do to ourselves. But the question is how many of us ever care to watch them when they appear before us? How many of us dare question them? And how many of us actually believe them when they speak something to us? What a pity it is that when some of us leave this body, our nearest and dearest ones run away from us in fear when we want to appear before them after that change which we call death ! What a painful thing it is to the husband who goes unrecognised by his wife when he appears after his death because she thinks that he has left her for ever ! How shocking it is to the wife when her own dear husband cannot recognise her when she appears before him after her so-called death ! But I have seen not only my own mother but also other mothers to hold out their loving hands to the child who has once left them

and has reappeared before them. I should like to assure all my fellowmen, whether they believe me or not, that all relations in this world as parents or children, as brothers or sisters, as husbands or wives are real and permanent, and they can not be severed by the change which we call death. Many people may not attach any sanctity to any of these relations but I know of many cases in which the loving husband or the wife the affectionate mother or the father, the devoted brother or the sister has appeared over and over again before his or her near and dear one, not in a dream but in full wakefulness, not in the form of a shadow but in flesh and blood, after he or she has been buried or cremated. Such loving souls have done sometimes a great service to some of their dearest relations by warning them against certain dangers, certain misfortunes, certain grave calamities far in advance of their occurrence. Most people remember only the injuries done by certain souls who could not forgive the faults or crimes of others even when they had been buried or cremated. People say that murder can never be concealed. It is a fact that the murderer

walks to the very spot of his crime and is caught there by the hands of law. But who directs them to the spot of their crime? Not the conscience of the murderer, nor mere accident or chance but the soul of the victim of murder. Many of the murderers have confessed their crime in sleep. But who has made them confess their crime? It is the soul of the murdered who wanders about everywhere to get the opportunity of taking his revenge on the murderer. Never believe that the instincts of anger, envy, jealousy, pride, treachery etc disappear with the burial or the cremation of the body. If they could disappear like that, they could never return with every human soul from generation to generation. We believe in biological heredity but not in psychological heredity. By psychological heredity I do not mean merely the inheritance of certain mental qualities but I mean the persistence of every one of the characteristics of the universal soul which manifest themselves in the individual soul in every form of existence. Those who are not prepared to accept my theory, I would simply ask them, wherefrom these human instincts have come?



They would probably say that they have come from environments out of the process of slow and gradual evolution. Perfectly right. But what are our environments, and what is that process of evolution? In my opinion, our environments are nothing but ourselves and the process of evolution is also nothing but a slow and gradual appearance and reappearance of the very same qualities of the universal soul that project themselves into the individual soul from time to time. Even the senses which suppress and oppress the qualities of the universal soul are originally existent in the universal soul, and that is why, the individual soul can never rise above the senses even after several births and deaths or rather after several transformations.

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## CHAPTER XI

### My last meeting with Gandhiji

For the last three years I have been teaching to the Third year and the Fourth year classes of my college the biography of Mahatma Gandhi by Romain Rolland. While teaching I have been always criticising the religious, political and even the moral views of Mahatma Gandhi, and have been also inviting criticism from my students. I have been pointing out how the French writer, Romain Rolland, has willingly or unwillingly played the same victim like many others of my countrymen to certain ideas and principles of Mahatma Gandhi, which appear to me as unnatural, unscientific, and even irrational. For example, Mahatma Gandhi's conception of cow worship by the Hindus, his conception of the caste system or the *Varnasrama* of the Hindus, his conception of *ahimsa* or non-violence, and even his conception of truth, and a few other such ideas appear to me as

based on the general prejudices and superstitions of the human mind from which Mahatma Gandhi was not free in spite of his broad outlook on certain affairs such as universal brotherhood and universal love, international unity and harmony. I have been often pointing out to my students the inconsistencies of Romain Rolland while defending Mahatma Gandhi's views, of course, always with an apology lest my students, who are staunch worshippers of Mahatma Gandhi, should misunderstand me. One day, in the class-room, I had such a hard wrangle with some of my students that for the whole day I felt very sad at heart, and I wished, I could meet Mahatma Gandhi face to face and point out to him his inconsistencies. But then, Mahatma Gandhi was no more in this world, and even while he was alive, I never had the opportunity of meeting him personally and putting him questions on certain points or problems in which I happened to differ with him radically. I have already mentioned in my preface to this book that while I was a college boy, I used to write to the *Statesman*, the *Englishman* and the *Indian Daily News* criticising man

of the steps of Mahatma Gandhi in his political movements, and also when I was at Lahore working as a professor, I happened to write a few books criticising ruthlessly his ideas on education, health, sex and morality. Some of my books were reviewed favourably or unfavourably by the *Hindu*, the *Amritbazar Patrika*, the *Tribune* and other leading journals of our country. I did not know at that time that I would have to write again about Mahatma Gandhi as I am doing now, not criticising any of his ideas or views, but making certain revelations of his mysterious contact with me after his death.

That day when I was feeling very unhappy on account of my wrangle with my students about Gandhiji, I could not do any work in the night. I went to my hotel as usual for my dinner immediately after my tennis. I stayed in the hotel till ten o'clock in the night listening to music in the radio in order to forget Gandhiji altogether. But when I returned to my college quarters and wanted to work on the typewriter for some time, my eyes were constantly drawn to the two calendars of Gandhiji which were hanging on the walls of my room. I was again

reminded of the wrangle with my students, and so, I decided to go to bed at once. But I could not fall asleep easily because I was not used to going to bed so early in the night. For sometime I tossed in the bed thinking constantly of Gandhiji, his assassination, his departed soul, his services to our country and his memory in the hearts of millions of my countrymen. I do not know when suddenly I fell asleep.

During my sleep I had a very strange dream which I never had in my life. I saw before my eyes a hideous picture of millions of dead bodies, cities and buildings blown to pieces, earthquakes and floods raging all over the world, and Mahatma Gandhi appearing on the top of the Himalayas. Mahatma Gandhi beckoned me to the invisible top of the great mountain. I was standing at the very foot of the Himalayas. I wondered how I should be able to climb those dizzy heights. I shouted to Gandhiji at the top of my voice, "How shall I come to you?" Gandhiji replied, "Come on your wings." To my greatest wonder, I found that my shoulders suddenly grew two big wings, and with those two wings I began to

fly. I flew and flew winging my way through the mists and the clouds. I was sometimes carried furthest away from the mountain by the storms and the blasts that came out from the caves. Slowly I folded my wings sometimes which helped me in going nearer to the mountain. I floated like a bubble in the air and yet did not burst. I feared sometimes that I would suddenly fall down from that great height just as Icharus fell down with his molten wings. But I did not fall down. I saw distinctly that Gandhiji was watching me from the top and waving his hand encouragingly towards me. I climbed higher and higher. Sometimes, I felt, I became completely enveloped in the clouds, and Gandhiji must have wondered where I was lost. But a moment afterwards, I came out of the clouds and Gandhiji smiled at me.

How long I climbed those heights I can not tell but I never felt tired of climbing. Higher and higher I rose on my wings and more and more I felt blithe of spirit and free of movements. I sniffed the air and I felt it so thin and rare. It felt like a vacuum and yet it was not a vacuum. I noticed the

snows lying deep on the sides of the mountain. Sometimes I felt a shiver because the very sight of the snows was so bitterly cold but the very next moment, I felt a strange warmth in my wings and in my whole body. It was a very strange atmosphere of cold and warmth, but how it could be so at that incredible height, I wondered.

Gandhiji probably got impatient of my delay. I heard him uttering the words, "Quick! It is getting too late." The moment I heard those words I was at once lifted up with a mighty sweep of my wings to the very top of the Himalayas, nay, to the very spot where Gandhiji was standing. Gandhiji held out his hands to me, and at once I landed just near him. I looked at Gandhiji's face. He said in reply as if reading my heart, "You had been worrying about me for long, and that is why, I have brought you here. This is the highest point in the universe, and from here alone you can have a correct view of things. Look ! What do you see all around you and below you ?" I cast a look around me and below me. The vapours, the clouds and the mists all cleared off, and I could see distinctly a picture of the earth's

surface on which were lying the havocs of war, not of the elements of nature but of the various nations and races of mankind. I put a question to Gandhiji, "How can we stop war amongst mankind?" Gandhiji said, "War can never be stopped. War is one of the laws of nature. Without war there can not be any creation, and with permanent peace, the earth can not have any change." I interrupted him and enquired, "But you have been telling us that love is the only way to peace and non-violence is the only way to conquer violence." Gandhiji at once replied, "I did not mean that hatred should disappear permanently from this world. What you call hatred is not hatred but a kind of repulsion which is necessary for making love more active, and what you call love is not love but a kind of attraction which is necessary for exciting hatred in order to revive the inactive. So, both the processes are but counterparts of the same and operate alternately in this universe for the creation and destruction of not only the birds, the animals and the human beings but also of the sun and the moon and the stars. I never said that vio-



lence is destructive or non-violence is constructive. Every thing in the universe is violent in the beginning because without it there can not be any change, but at the end, violence settles down to non-violence. The nations which are warring on earth are in their making and must go on warring until they attain perfection, and when they have attained perfection, there is no violence, no war."

I readily put a question again, "Do you mean to say that the nations which do not war with one another have attained their perfection ?" Gandhiji said, "Certainly not. Such nations are in their budding stage, and when they will cross that stage, the desire for perfection will arise in their hearts and they will at once begin to war with other nations. The nations which are more aggressive than others are certainly more desirous of attaining perfection than others, and by waging war they gain in growth and development rather than they lose anything. Therefore, violence is the way to growth and development." I could not appreciate Gandhiji's arguments and therefore said, "Do you mean to say that

the animals which fight with one another in the jungles or the human races which used to fight with one another in the ancient past. were more progressive creatures than those of today who have built the cities, the temples and the churches, the universities and the industrial workshops?" Gandhiji smiled and answered, "Certainly they were, if we judge them by the currents of time in which they engaged themselves in violence. You must know that there are cycles of progress and retrogress in every kingdom of nature. We can not compare one cycle with another without taking into consideration all the factors which operate in the conflict during a particular period of time."

I dropped the controversy of violence and non-violence, and switched on our discussion to other topics. I said to Gandhiji, "I have not been able to understand what this universe is and wherefrom it came." Gandhiji said, "There is nothing to understand about this universe. It did not come from anything. It is nothing but a projection of yourself. You are yourself the universe." I said, "How can it be? Do you mean to say that the sun and the moon and

the stars, and this world with its mountains, forests, oceans, rivers, birds, beasts and human beings are nothing or merely a projection of myself ?” Gandhiji said, “If it is not so, can you feel its existence when you close your mind and all your senses ?” I said, “That may be true, but how is it that the whole universe revives as many times as I open my senses ? Why does it not disappear altogether or stay on permanently with me ?” Gandhiji said, “Because you want to play with your senses making and unmaking this universe.” I at once enquired, “What do you mean by senses ?” He replied, “Your senses are your own organs of creation and destruction. When you close your eyes, can you see ? When you close your ears, can you hear ? When you hold your tongue, can you speak ? When you close your nose, can you smell ?” I said, “But what’s about those who are born blind, deaf or dumb ? Do you mean to say, they can see, hear and speak whenever they want ?” Gandhiji answered, “None is born blind or deaf or dumb, because there is nobody else in the universe except you. It is only when you want to think yourself to

deaf or dumb or blind that you find others to be so."

I then talked of God and enquired, "Do you think, there is any God or creator of this universe?" He readily answered, "Nobody is the creator of the universe. You are yourself the creator, and so, you can call yourself God or any thing." I asked him again, "Who were those great persons—Christ, Mohammad and Buddha, and yourself, too?" Gandhiji smiled and said, "You are again and again committing the same blunder. Christ, Mohammad, Buddha or myself was nobody than yourself. There is no question of any great or small person. If you want to flatter yourself as great you can do so, and if you want to regard yourself as small, nobody can prevent you from thinking so."

I got completely confused with the answers Gandhiji gave to my questions. I therefore dropped the discussion about God and the universe. I appealed to Gandhiji and said, "Please do explain to me a few smaller problems for which I could not find any solution. Should man have any religion? Should he follow virtue and shun vice?"

Should he serve others and not himself at all?' Gandhiji replied, "There is no religion. There is no virtue. There is no other being than yourself. Without somebody else there cannot be any relation, and it is with certain relations that the problem of religion or virtue or service arises. When you project yourself and create a universe, all sorts of religion of love and hatred, all sorts of good and evil actions, and all sorts of punishments and rewards come into existence. But when you want to be yourself and no other, there is no problem for you to solve. But so long you are fond of creating a universe for yourself, you cannot run away from the problems of the various relations. You can never cut off all your connections with your own creatures if you simply run away from human society, because by running away from human society, you enter into relations with other creatures which you have brought into existence—the birds or the animals, the trees or the plants, the rocks or the waters, the planets or the stars.'

I again got confused by the manner of the answers of Gandhiji. I stopped for a

while and said to him, "Why have you called me here? Why have you appeared to me over and over again? When you were on earth, you never knew me. Are you the same Gandhiji who worked for the independence of our country?" Gandhiji said, "I have not called you here. It is you who have come here. You are again mistaking me to be other than yourself. I do not know of any country nor did I work for its independence. I have no name as you have no name. I never appeared before you but whenever you want me to appear, I have to appear." I put my last question to him, "Shall I relate to the world what I have seen and heard from you?" He simply said, "Just as you wish."

With the utterance of those words, the proud top of the Himalayas began to thaw like the snows, and Gandhiji's figure was completely lost in the clouds of mist and fog which suddenly arose out of the surrounding air. Myself with the thawing of the Himalayas came down rolling like a feather with the mighty avalanche. My wings were no more with me. I felt a horror when I looked below into the endless depths of the valley.

Down, down, I went shooting like an arrow. The rocks and the stones did not hurt me but felt like the particles of soft snow. I heard the roaring of many a mountain river over which I glided like a tiny leaf. I floated and floated without end. There was a peculiar sensation of ease but the feeling of speed was there. My arms and legs were stretched to their full length just like those of a swan diving from a great height into water. But I had no wings. The air in which I floated and the water into which I dived seemed to be as thin as ether, and I felt hardly the touch of them. The surrounding scenes of the mountain seemed to flit like a panorama of various colours. I came far below the mists and the clouds, and yet there was no end of my journey. I looked about to see how far I had climbed down. The foot of the Himalayas was still invisible. I wanted to dive with greater speed, and actually I kicked my limbs with all my might. I felt just at that moment as if the whole mountain came with a crash over my head. I cried out in pain. The dream melted. I suddenly woke up and found myself thrown from the charpoy on the floor of my room!

